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FIRST THINGS

May 1996
Number 63

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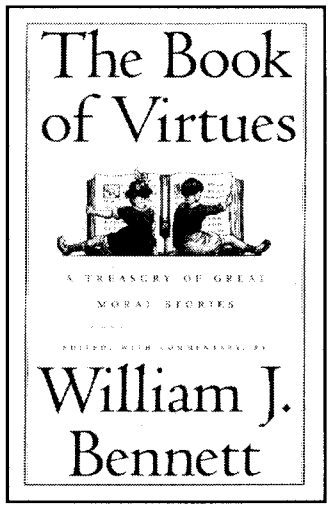

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FIRST THINGS

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The Mission of the Christian University

Gertrude Himmelfarb and Richard John Neuhaus wisely note ("The Christian University," January) that the ideals of a Christian university are complex ideals. For Himmelfarb, a university to be authentically Christian must nurture both intellectual virtue and moral virtue. Although she does not make the connection explicit, surely Himmelfarb would agree that one of these virtues without the other is not enough. For Neuhaus the operation of a Christian university involves serpent-like wisdom as well as dove-like innocence. Would that all trustees and administrators at such institutions saw the operational realities as clearly as Neuhaus presents them—e.g., "the [Christian] university is better served by an agnostic who wants the university to be Christian than by a devout believer who does not."

The only major element I would add to these two bracing addresses is explicit acknowledgment of the intellectually instrumental character of Christian universities. Properly functioning Christian universities, in Neuhaus' fine phrase, "settle for nothing less than a comprehensive account of reality." But precisely because they are places where *Christian* truths are honored—for example, the soteriological truth that Christians are redeemed by grace and not because they are perfected (intellectually or any other way), or the truth of general revelation that God graciously bestows intellectual abilities (sometimes of a high order) beyond the borders of the churches—Christian universities will never think too highly of their ability to fulfill their high calling on their own.

Since the goal of a Christian university is to promote the most comprehensive possible knowledge of God and what God has made possible in the created world, it is only appropriate for those who labor in Christian universities to recognize how much they need the work of truth-seekers who are not Christians and the work of Christians who do not teach at Christian universities. An ideal Christian university would be one that recognizes its need for help and yet is savvy enough to pursue that help without compromising its doxological reason for existence.

Mark A. Noll
McManis Professor of
Christian Thought
Wheaton College
Wheaton, IL

Richard John Neuhaus mentions Harvard's changing motto. During the seventeenth century, the college charter bore the motto *In Christi gloriam* (1650) and *Christo et ecclesiae* (1692). It was not until the Unitarian takeover of the college and its divinity school in the early nineteenth century that *Veritas* alone became Harvard's official watchword.

Harvard President (1829-1845) Josiah Quincy insisted that the earlier mottoes had never enjoyed official status. For him and his Unitarian contemporaries, "Church" and "Truth" were in fundamental opposition: one relied upon revelation and tradition, the other upon the unaided use of reason as it guided humanity toward its natural perfection.

How our universities have dwindled from even that belief! Truth has come to be understood not as a certainty that can be found—or at least approximated—by the earnest seeker, but as the dynamite with which to blow up all existing or possible certainties.

Gertrude Himmelfarb is, as always, on target when she points out that, in the absence of accountability to the permanent things, "the university is at the mercy of the whims and wills of interest groups and ideologies." An example in my own field is the almost universal support among academics (most recently indeed at Harvard) for the education establishment's bitter opposition to policies allowing poor parents to choose schools. Why? It seems to come down to the conviction that such parents could not possibly make wise choices; experts (guess who?) should decide what is good for their children.

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How can a university, in Neuhaus' phrase, "present itself believably as Christian"? Nothing in the research on education seems to me more certain than that it is those schools and colleges that express, in all that they do, a distinctive character that are most effective in their educational mission—indeed, that *have* an educational mission. Distinctive character is not sustained by organizational affiliation alone, but only by a clearly articulate ethos expressing a coherent understanding of the Good Life and thus of the purposes of education.

The indistinctiveness of many institutions with formal or vestigial denominational connections may thus be the fault not only of craven administrators, desperate for peace at any price, and of faculty who have forgotten (if they ever knew) why they teach and to what end they seek the truth, but also of churches that have themselves lost confidence in a Truth that may be known and preached, loved and followed, much less taught. If the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who can prepare for battle?

Charles L. Glenn
School of Education
Boston University
Boston, MA

Gertrude Himmelfarb is quite right to insist that the single most important development in recent decades in the university world has been the abandonment of faith in reason and knowledge—a rejection of the "commitment to truth, knowledge, and objectivity." Indeed, the abandonment of this centuries-old academic dogma has been, in her words, "utterly disastrous for the university."

In 1992, Lynne Cheney, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, released a report (*Telling the Truth*) that was chilling in its account of the widespread loss of faith in the very notion of objective truth by many in the academic world. As sociologist Edward Shils of the University of Chicago put it: "There is abroad today a desire, more frequently expressed by academics in the humanities and the social sciences, to derogate or even to dissolve the idea that truths can be discovered and taught."

Father Neuhaus is accurate when he contends that "secular is not a synonym for neutral." And to the extent that secularism as an ideology involves a kind of disembodied notion of freedom, Himmelfarb is on target to insist that "freedom from truth is a prescription for intellectual and moral nihilism."...

As to the apostasy of the modern university, and even large segments of the Church, there were prophets of the nineteenth century who deserve our attention. In October 1873, John Henry Cardinal Newman preached a sermon entitled "The Infidelity of the Future." He told the students of a new seminary near Birmingham "that the trials which lie before us are such as would appall and make dizzy even such courageous hearts as St. Athanasius, St. Gregory I, or St. Gregory VII. And they would confess that, dark as the prospect of their own day was to them severally, ours has a darkness different in kind from any that has been before it."

Newman feared that Protestants might well abandon orthodoxy, and he went on to observe that "Christianity has never yet had experience of a world simply irreligious." A century and a quarter later who would question the term "irreligious" to describe much of the academic world?

The inevitable consequence of our religious and intellectual myopia is the juxtaposition of "irreligious" and "unthinking." Himmelfarb is exactly right to argue that a religious academic institution "now has not only a religious tradition to uphold but an intellectual one as well; the mission to restore and revitalize the traditional academic dogma."

We who are involved in Christian higher education must recapture the high ground not just of proclaiming religious truth, but of reaffirming the age-old faith of universities of centuries past—faith in the existence of truth and the ability of fallible human beings to sift through their own limitations to discern that which is more true from that which is less.

As we nurture both soul and mind, we could well use as our motto the words of Cardinal Newman one hundred and forty years ago: "I want the intellectual layman to be religious and the devout ecclesiastic to be intellectual." This must be the mission of the Christian university.

Kent R. Hill
President
Eastern Nazarene College
Quincy, MA

I agree with much of Professor Himmelfarb's essay on the Christian university, but her account of the secularization of higher education fails to give due credit to several of the major villains.

Himmelfarb argues that the warfare of science and religion has been much exaggerated; it was not science (or Darwinism), but the rational, liberal culture of the Enlightenment that secularized education. Well, perhaps, but what gave rise to the rational, liberal culture of the Enlightenment? Many things, of course—not the least of which were modern science and the this-worldly, relentlessly secular goals of a burgeoning business civilization.

Modern science provides the intellectual framework for modernity, and there is no room for God in its scheme of things. Of course it was not the overt hostility of science to religion that drove God from our intellectual life; the open warfare was limited to a few skirmishes. Rather, God simply became irrelevant. But whether by means of a smoking gun or through methodological neglect, modern science, by means of its immense cultural authority, has played a much more powerful role in marginalizing religion in our educational institutions than Himmelfarb acknowledges.

The cultural authority of science derives in part from its intellectual elegance, but it has another source. During the eighteenth century, and then even more in the nineteenth century, the modern West became a business civilization as the hearts and minds of people were reoriented from salvation in the world to come to happiness and the material goods of this life. Science played a crucial role in all of this, for science made

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possible the technology that fueled industrialization, the creation of wealth, consumer goods, and, in the end, consumerism.

As a result, over the last two centuries the purposes of both schooling and higher education became increasingly utilitarian as educators, legislators, and the businessmen who replaced clergymen on boards of trustees came to recognize the relationship between education and business. America needed skilled workers and professionals, a scientifically and technologically literate workforce, to compete in the marketplace—and students, for their part, were increasingly inclined to pay their tuition for the kind of education that would prepare them for the marketplace.

Himmelfarb assigns some blame for secularization to the tendency of universities, funded by large sums of government money, to take on the problems of society—poverty, pollution, urban unrest, and crime, for example. But the traditional religious and classical purposes of higher education were subverted in much more profound ways by the role that universities have been given in addressing the economic needs of society.

The secularization of American education was no more intended than the secularization of modern Western culture. In both cases it has been nurtured and sustained, in large part, by scientists and social scientists, economists, businessmen, and practical legislators who, while often enough religious in their private lives, find no place for God or religion in their public lives or in how they understand the world. Conveying their sense of things in our educational institutions we secularize students and the world. Indeed, I'm inclined to think them more influential, all things considered, than those postmodern intellectuals to whom Himmelfarb assigns so much blame.

Warren A. Nord
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, NC

Gertrude Himmelfarb replies:

I do not agree that science and business are the "villains" of the piece. Nor would I say that the secularization of education is itself a "villain." All three, to be sure, have the potential for mischief. The pressures of business may make for a more utilitarian education than many of us would like. The presumptuousness of some scientists may stimulate a science vs. religion mentality. And the secular university may degenerate into a secularist one that is not neutral as among religions but hostile to religion itself.

In principle, however, all three are compatible with the "academic dogma" described by Robert Nisbet: the faith in reason, knowledge, and truth. It took postmodernism to challenge that dogma and thus to undermine the traditional mission of the university.

It was in 1852, a few years after his dramatic conversion to Catholicism, that John Henry Newman gave expression to that dogma in the lectures later published as *The Idea of a University*. Religion, he assured his new coreligionists, had nothing to fear from "all knowledge and science" so long as each respected the truth of the other.

> [The university is] the high protecting power of all knowledge and science, of fact and principle, of inquiry and discovery, of experiment and speculation; it maps out the territory of the intellect, and sees that the boundaries of each province are religiously respected, and that there is neither encroachment nor surrender of any side. It acts as umpire between truth and truth, and, taking into account the nature and importance of each, assigns to all their due order of precedence.

Moral Equivalence

In his essay "Form Over Matter" (February), David R. Carlin accuses the drafters of the U.S. Catholic Conference statement of asserting, in their formulation of a particular passage, "a moral equivalence between abortion and the enforcement of laws against illegal immigration," but all he manages to do in making that accusation is provide yet another example of the academic impulse to find something wrong with everything. Carlin builds his argument on fancy concepts like Aristotelianism and epigrammatic parallelism, and even gets to throw in a swell-sounding Latin phrase (presumably for academic effect). What he doesn't do, however, is make a very convincing argument, in form or matter. . . .

The place where Carlin steers completely off course is when he claims three times in two sentences that the USCC passage *says* that there is a moral equivalence between immigration laws and abortion (earlier in the article Carlin states that the passage merely suggests it and later that it only implies it). Carlin is now simply stumbling over his own mind-boggling inferences. Because the passage mentions abortion and immigration in the same sentence, Carlin takes that to mean that the authors intended some sort of moral equivalence. Balderdash! No one with any common sense would read it that way. In case Carlin didn't notice, it was merely an attempt at alliteration on the part of the authors—"unborn" and "undocumented," "womb" and "welfare," "violence" and "vengeance." Nothing more than that. In the vernacular of my generation, Carlin needs to chill out, get his head out from under the shadows of his ivory tower, and take a deep breath of common sense.

Michael Bruner
Princeton, NJ

David Carlin suggests that the Catholic bishops would respond to his opinion piece by arguing that he failed to read their entire document. That is a classic straw man. I believe the more accurate criticism is that he improperly read into the few lines he criticized in his page-and-a-half opinion other portions of the bishops' positions both inside and outside the bishops' "Political Responsibility: Proclaiming the Gospel of Life.". . .

One can disagree with the bishops' position on continuing welfare for the repeat child-bearer without accepting Professor Carlin's opinion. Likewise, one can disagree with

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the position (if it is truly that of the bishops, which I question) that illegal immigration should not be curbed. The bishops were not advocating those positions, however, in the "disastrous" parallelism cited by Professor Carlin. Does he disagree that the child on welfare is equally important as the child in the womb? Does he disagree that every person—whether a legally unrecognized unborn child or a legally prohibited immigrant—possesses equal human rights? Regardless of numbers, does he disagree that a nonchalance toward the unborn child and a sense of vengeance against the vicious killer can equally demonstrate serious misunderstandings regarding the dignity of human life? The thoughtful, eloquent conclusion of his opinion piece suggests not. . . .

We can legitimately dispute the merits of particular proposals the bishops make. But we must recognize that, coming into the public square, the bishops consciously refuse to be restricted by "liberal-conservative" political categories. In their best moments, the bishops are discussing social issues from a perspective that is truly different from the one to which "Form over Matter" limited itself. Why not seriously address both the bishops' perspective and their "prudential judgment?". . .

Joseph Valentine
Munsey Park, NY

David R. Carlin replies:

Actually I introduced the Latin phrase (primus inter pares) not for academic effect, but to curry favor with Anglican readers of First Things. I would be delighted to learn that Mr. Bruner's reading of the passage in question is correct and my reading wrong; for that would mean that no Catholic politician could use the passage to mitigate the guilt of a pro-choice position. Unfortunately, Mr. Bruner's way of arguing, which substitutes ad hominem attacks (please forgive the Latin phrase) for reasoning, leaves me with scant confidence that his way of reading is any better. I fear my reading of the passage may be the correct one.

In response to Mr. Valentine's questions: Yes, all humans are equal in fundamental dignity but not all wrongdoing is equal. Thus abortion is a greater sin than, say, setting a welfare cap. Further, not all immorality is equally *certain*. Thus abortion is clearly wrong, while setting a welfare cap is wrong only if it proves to be harmful—a very debatable proposition.

The trouble with the controversial passage in the USCC statement is that it implies that all the evils mentioned are equally wicked and equally certain in their wickedness. This strange doctrine is not something Catholic moral theology teaches, and it is of course not a doctrine the bishops truly hold. This passage therefore is misleading and available for grave misuse.

Reconsidering a Reconsideration

The editors of First Things are to be commended for their courage in printing Carol Iannone's "The Last Temptation Reconsidered" (February). I am sure you will receive hate mail from those who object to your doing so. . . .

When the film came out in 1988, so much pressure was brought to bear on the Flagstaff, Arizona theater owners that they refused to show it. Upset by that kind of censorship, a dozen or so of us, then members of the city's small Unitarian Universalist fellowship, carpooled to Phoenix one Saturday afternoon to see it. At the theater we were met by rabid pickets who shouted that if we looked at the film we would surely go to hell. (Of course, for Unitarians, that wasn't much of a deterrent.)

After sitting through the long movie, we left with a feeling that we had done our duty in helping to uphold what we saw as the basic freedom of artists to express themselves. As far as the movie itself was concerned, only now, after reading Carol Iannone's article, have I come to understand and appreciate it.

James L. Sanders
Flagstaff, AZ

Carol Iannone's reassessment of *The Last Temptation of Christ* is a timely reminder of how easy it is for traditionalists to accept uncritically what they are told rather than to think through each unique and difficult cultural issue on its own merits.

Though I was surrounded by people who were up in arms when Scorsese's film was released and who treated it as the ultimate blasphemy, I knew enough of Kazantzakis' novel and the plot of the film to have raised a few questions at the time. My questions were precisely the ones that Ms. Iannone raises—questions having to do with whether *The Last Temptation* might actually constitute a serious (though not necessarily completely orthodox) inquiry into the nature of Jesus' life and work. It seemed disingenuous for people who decried the secularization of society to protest a film that raised issues which serious theologians have wrestled with for millennia. What was worse, of course, was that few of the protesters had any idea of what either Kazantzakis or Scorsese was trying to say, having never seen the movie, much less read the book. . . .

(The Rev.) Philip E. Hakanson
First Covenant Church
Omaha, NE

Carol Iannone, Nikos Kazantzakis, and Martin Scorsese hold one thing in common. They believe Jesus was a "tormented, fearful young man confused by sex . . . a lonely, masochistic soul full of self contempt." They also believe he suffered from "existential dread, and yes, even sexual obsessiveness.". . .

Yes, Jesus was fully human in every respect, *except sin*. He was certainly tempted sexually, but he just as certainly didn't lust after women. He willingly took on suffering for our sakes, but he in no way was masochistic. . . .

What makes *The Last Temptation* ludicrous, if not blasphemous, is that Jesus is reduced to yet another man's image of himself (a typical form of self-idolatry). Kazantzakis and Scorsese both want to make Christ over in their image. Nothing new and exciting in this. Just two more of millions of failed attempts.

Gil Costello
Seattle, WA

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. . . The weak, vacillating Jesus of the *Last Temptation*, with false beliefs in his own mission and coming late to a comprehension that his mission was one of the sacrifice of himself for our sins, is completely foreign to the Christ of Scripture whose stature and startling statements caused twelve men to leave all to follow him. Can anyone imagine such a man founding a religion that would course across the pages of human history, making saints and martyrs out of those who followed him?

Even more incredible is Ms. Iannone's justification for the prolonged fantasy as Christ hangs on the cross, a fantasy in which he experiences the life of marriage, sex, and family, and imagines what human history would be if he failed to complete his sacrifice. Her explanation is that he was experiencing our own temptations. But there is a large difference between Christ allowing himself to be tempted and our own submissions to temptation. . . .

Hortense Cupo
Staten Island, NY

Abortion: Moralities in Conflict

What J. Bottum has identified ("Facing Up To Infanticide," February) in the current struggle between abortionists and anti-abortionists is the beginning of the true "end of history": the ultimate struggle between good and evil. The reason that *this* battle between good and evil will be decisive is that for the first time in all such struggles, this one must take place where all good and evil truly begins: within the consciousness of the individual. The reasons behind this should be of some interest to us.

Mr. Bottum makes clear that the ethical system of abortionists is not that of anti-abortionists. The values each calls upon to defend its position are virtually unrelatable—for there is no way that comfort, convenience, and power can be expressed in terms equivalent to the concrete reality of life and death. The result is that, while the undeniable realities of the issue have forced abortionists to retreat to the position of admitting to all of the "facts" of abortion, by employing a whole different set of values they reach an exactly opposite conclusion regarding their moral significance. "Killing unborn human babies is what we do," they admit, "but look at all the reasons that doing so is the superior moral choice." And vague and inaccurate references are made to world population, birth defects, the terrible "risks" of childbirth, the cruelty of being born into poverty, the terrible loss of freedom motherhood places on a woman, the tragedy to both mother and child of an unwanted pregnancy, and whatever other possibility seems to flash across their mind. In the end, however, their argument finally rests on choice rooted in a pure and simple imperative: "It is what I want.". . .

R. J. Bushelle
Barrington Hills, IL

In his otherwise insightful article, J. Bottum has misunderstood my position on abortion. He has put me in the same category as Naomi Wolf, who recognizes that abortion kills a human being but finds it morally justifiable as long as proper "atonement" is made for it afterwards. In an article in the current *Human Life Review* I characterized Wolf's conclusion as "sickly-sweet nonsense."

My own position is that abortion is always morally wrong, except in those extremely rare (perhaps nonexistent) cases where it is necessary to save the life of the mother. Grounded on that moral premise, my article addressed the *political* question of how best to translate it into public policy in 1990s America. I used the analogy of Lincoln in the 1850s because, like slavery at that time, abortion cannot be abolished outright. The votes aren't there. So I suggested we adopt the Lincoln approach of restricting and discouraging abortion while reaching out to and communicating with the large "mushy middle" of Americans.

My position is no different than that of many pro-lifers who work in the political arena, such as U.S. Rep. Henry Hyde and former Pennsylvania Governor Robert Casey. Hyde left rape and incest exceptions in his amendment limiting Medicaid abortion not because he thought it was morally permissible to kill those children but because he knew the amendment would not pass without the exceptions. Casey, as governor, sought to restrict Pennsylvania abortions, not abolish them, so, implicitly, he also adopted the Lincoln formula of "tolerate, restrict, discourage.". . .

George McKenna
Tenafly, NJ

J. Bottum's assessment of the current state of the abortion debate is as sobering as it is perceptive. It would indeed appear that the discourse on abortion has reached a point of fissure in which, employing Alasdair MacIntyre's felicitous terminology, there are two rival versions of morality in irreconcilable conflict. It is Mr. Bottum's genius to have construed the fundamental terms of that conflict not on the grounds of the formulation of a new ethic of abortion rights, but as the reformulation of an old clash—that between Christianity and paganism. Perhaps it was Hegel who most clearly uncovered the Stoic position (the highest, most fully conscious form of pagan philosophy) as one that dialectically passes over into despair, revealing the true nature of paganism as the failure to engage in and grasp the full reality of the human soul. . . .

At long last in the abortion debate we have reached a point of full self-awareness: we are led beyond rational argument to a single point—the hope, against all odds, that solely through the grace of Christ our culture will, as the prophet says, choose life.

Michael Raiger
New York, NY

The State of Czech Christianity

Despite Tomás Halík's worried assessment of Christianity in the Czech Republic ("Post-Communism and Its Discontents," January), things are not as gloomy as they might seem from the stony heights of the Prague Cathedral. True, the Catholic Church is largely disregard-

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ed among Czechs, and for the reasons he mentions.

Fr. Halík might, however, have considered that the state of the Catholic Church does not immediately reveal the state of the Church Catholic; in this case, thankfully so. His survey overlooked Czech Christians who claim the heritage of Jan Hus, the reformer who predated Luther, or the Moravian Brethren, originators of history's first modern missionary movement. Had he noticed the small but extremely vital evangelical/charismatic communities in that country, he would have had a foretaste of what Moravian Pastor Count von Zinzendorf gave as his definition, the first modern one, of ecumenism: a people unified in Christly love for the evangelization of the nations.

This historic calling is based thoroughly on the belief that "Jesus is *the* way, *the* truth, and *the* life." To Halík it might therefore seem an "attempt to return to the premodern." If so, it seems his preferred modernism would place the Church well outside the teachings of both the Fathers and the Bible, a sure hazard for anyone looking for the Church's future.

In 1994-1995 I taught English at a Czech university, during which time I had the opportunity to worship in a large, and growing, renewed Moravian Brethren congregation. This experience remains my most profound memory of that year, and has become my clearest tangible vision of what the Church can and someday will be.

Jonathan Stenseth
Minneapolis, MN

Tomás Halík replies:

I thank Mr. Stenseth for his letter. I am glad that he had the opportunity to experience the renewed congregation of the Moravian Brothers in our country. Some of my friends are members of this denomination. Even in the time of the Communist oppression I tried to encourage the ecumenical movement among the various Christian denominations within our country. I am by no means overlooking the evangelical Christians when I give my assessment of the state of the Church. However, it is incorrect to say that in the Czech Republic there is a "largely disregarded Catholic Church" as opposed to a thriving and alive evangelical community. The fact remains that the majority of Czech citizens are not affiliated with a church. Fewer than half of our citizens claim to be Christians, and of those who do 90 percent are Catholic. This leaves less than 10 percent of the religious minority that belong to different denominations, and those churches have problems of their own.

I also believe "Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life," and I do not believe in any way that the future of Christianity is to realign itself with modernism. When I referred to the perspective of the student who quoted those words of Jesus as fundamentalist and an attempt to return to the premodern, it was because he used Christ's words to suggest that Christians are owners of the truth and do not need to have dialogue with other people.

I believe that our "postmodern" time—opposed to the premodern and modern—allows us to arrive at a deeper understanding of the magnitude found in Christ's truth. His truth, the mystery of God, surpasses our ability to comprehend and to express it in a simple ideological way. And on our never-ending journey towards a deeper understanding, I believe that we do need other people, both Christians and non-Christians, as dialogue partners to help us along the way.

Islamic or Muslim?

I found Bernard Lewis' review of *the Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, edited by John Esposito (January), of great interest. Some of his criticisms are well-taken, but others are undermined by his missing the subtle, but important, distinction between "Islamic" society and "Muslim" society.

For example, Prof. Lewis complains about the editor's choices as to which figures merit articles. He professes that he could understand the choices for an encyclopedia of *Islam*, but asks how could an encyclopedia of the *Islamic world* not devote articles to Habib Bourguiba, Anwar Sadat, and Saddam Hussein, while including articles about Rashid Ghannouchi, Gamal Abdel Nasser, and Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafy. The answer lies in the fact that the term "Muslim leaders" denotes professing Muslims without regard to the nature of their understanding of or commitment to their religion, while "Islamic leaders" are those whose vision for society is somehow significantly rooted in their religion.

Thus the distinction between Bourguiba, whose mission was to secularize his society, and Ghannouchi, whose mission is to Islamicize it. Thus the distinction between Sadat, who restricted his piety to the observance of Islamic ritual, and Nasser, who blamed his loss of the 1967 war on his own earlier secularism. Thus the distinction between Qadhdhafy, who has always claimed—however absurdly—Islamic roots to his "Third Universal Theory," and Saddam Hussein, whose post-Iran War profession of Islam not only lacks credibility, but seems to be limited to praying before television cameras and adding some gold leaf to the Damascus mosque. Prof. Esposito understands the importance of these distinctions for an encyclopedia about the "Islamic" world as opposed to one about the "Muslim" world. By the same token, the Shah of Iran and Kemal Atatürk merit articles by virtue of the significance that their draconian secularization efforts had in motivating the rise of the Islamist movement.

Prof. Lewis' erudition regarding Islamic history makes his criticism worth reading. Yet, even he can benefit from Prof. Esposito's understanding of the nuances of the Islamic revival.

Imad-ad-Dean Ahmad
Minaret of Freedom Institute
Bethesda, MD

Bernard Lewis replies:

I would like to thank Dr. Imad ad-Dean Ahmad for his courteous and interesting letter, and for his suggested explanation of some otherwise inexplicable choices. But while his

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suggestion answers some questions, it raises others.

The worldwide English language has a number of autonomous regional variants with significant divergences of usage between them. In the English of South Asia and some adjoining countries, the difference between Islamic and Muslim is indeed as Dr. Ahmad says, and it is in this sense that one may speak of an Islamic movement, or society, or—mutatis mutandis—republic. This usage has also influenced other forms of English, including British and American. More commonly, however, in Anglo-American English the adjective "Muslim" refers to religion while "Islamic" refers to the whole civilization that grew up under the aegis of that religion—the counterpart of Christendom as distinct from Christianity. It is in this sense that we speak of Islamic astronomy, Islamic miniature painting, and the like, and, of course, the Islamic world.

If Dr. Ahmad is right, we must assume that the publishers and editors of the *Oxford Encyclopedia* have followed Indo-Pakistani rather than Anglo-American usage, and have moreover accepted the awesome responsibility of deciding which self-styled Muslims qualify for inclusion by this definition of Islamic, whether as exponents (like Qadhdhafy), as opponents (like Atatürk), or as penitents (like Nasser). It is a tempting but on the whole unlikely hypothesis.

I take this opportunity to reply to another letter, sent not to the editor but to me personally. The writer takes issue with my use of the word "sectary" to describe Baha' Allah, as this implies that Baha'ism is a sect of Islam and not a new religion. I agree that my use of this term could be misleading, and offer my apologies.

Hazardous or Not?

Remembering Dean M. Kelley's interesting article on Waco last year (May 1995), I was greatly disappointed to read his review of four new books dealing with the tragedy (February 1996). Kelley stumbles by uncritically accepting some chemical data that he found in Carol Moore's book *The Davidian Massacre* and that is also mentioned in *The Ashes of Waco* by Dick Reavis, namely, the alleged perils of methylene chloride.

Events at Waco are controversial enough without spreading outright falsehood. As an organic chemist with thirty years' experience, I must dispute claims about the hazardous properties of methylene chloride, the carrier of the CS powder pumped into the Mt. Carmel complex. A highly volatile liquid, methylene chloride *cannot* burn or explode in air without oxygen enrichment. It may indeed produce toxic phosgene when *decomposed* by a flame, but any fire will produce carbon monoxide, a far deadlier compound. Experiments have shown that inhaling methylene chloride vapor at the high concentrations of twenty-five thousand parts per million for two hours is not lethal, although it can induce narcosis (hence its use in Europe as a local anesthetic). This information is readily available. Moore, Reavis, and Kelley could have checked chemistry's bible, *The Merck Index*, at any library or even consulted a chemist.

Instead, Reavis presents erroneous data from an unidentified text after darkly identifying methylene chloride as a "petroleum derivative" to conjure up a fire hazard in the reader's mind. Why didn't Mr. Kelley notice the manipulative quality of his prose? How did he swallow Reavis' description of two Davidian infants allegedly born "by evolutionary reflex" after their mothers' deaths in the assault? Mr. Kelley's review does gullibly mention the hypothesis that ethanol found in the corpses indicates "a highly flammable solvent." But autopsies were delayed and decaying bodies produce ethanol, as happened to victims of the recent Colombian plane crash. . . .

John L. Miesel
Indianapolis, IN

Dean M. Kelley replies:

It is good of John L. Miesel to help us lay persons make our way through the labyrinths of science. We need all the help we can get, especially when we get conflicting information from equally credentialed authorities.

My comments about methylene chloride were not derived from the books by Carol Moore or Dick Reavis, though they may have relied on some of the same sources I have. My information came from a correspondent in Tucson, who seems equally conversant with *The Merck Index* and similar sources. He has been bombarding me with photocopies from such august reference works, and I found some of the "scientific" descriptions of methylene chloride as alarming as those of CS gas.

"Fumes from paint strippers containing methylene chloride are metabolized to CO in the body and can cause severe symptoms. . . . Headache, nausea, vomiting, weakness, and collapse often are followed by coma and death" (*The Merck Manual*, 15th edition, p. 2404).

"Unusual fire and explosion hazards: vapors concentrated in a confined or poorly ventilated area can be ignited upon contact with a high energy spark, flame, or high intensity source of heat. This can occur at concentrations ranging between 12-19 percent by vol. Decomposition or burning can produce hydrogen chloride or possible traces of phosgene. . . . Methylene chloride vapors are heavier than air and will collect in low areas" (*Hazardous Material Data Sheet*).

If the scientific gentlemen would just agree on the significance of their ostensibly empirical data, it would help us less knowledgeable seekers greatly.

Everybody's a Critic

If James Nuechterlein, a writer whose work I normally appreciate, ever gets the urge again to pen a column about the movies, I hope he will sit down and breathe deeply until the feeling goes away ("Lost in the Movies," February).

The American President is nothing more than the first volley in the Hollywood left's Reelect Bubba campaign. Here are a Bill and Hillary we could really come to like—attractive, knowing, concerned, astute, without all the inconvenient lying, megalo-

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mania, bribery, and cover-ups. He's cute, principled, he unzips his fly. She's committed, warm, she gets her way. So there is enough verisimilitude to keep us from pinching ourselves and enough fantasy to warn us against doing so.

But it's when it comes to *Pulp Fiction* that Mr. Nuechterlein is most off the mark. To equate *Pulp Fiction* with *Kids* is like comparing *A Clockwork Orange* with a snuff movie, since both deal with despicable people doing despicable actions. Like *A Clockwork Orange* (a movie with the most mercilessly presented Christian message of any film I know), *Pulp Fiction* is populated with what appear to be truly unredeemable characters, characters none of us will ever meet, characters that likely don't exist in the real world, characters out of pulp fiction. And they do all the characteristic things we have come to expect, like shoot up, snort, whack, take dives, bugger—hell, they even smoke. But unlike Rob Reiner's liberal fluff, Quentin Tarantino fills his movie with characters whose central anxieties concern proprieties and manners, redemption and renewal, divine intervention and retribution, the Last Four Things.

It is a spare world, and the humor is harsh and brutal, but underneath all the violence is a world in which both our actions and our reasons are serious not because they advance or retard a political agenda but because the state of one's soul is life's most decisive, profound, and serious charge.

Bruce Fingerhut
South Bend, IN

James Nuechterlein replies:

Bruce Fingerhut's comments on *The American President* do not disagree with mine. He simply focuses on a different aspect of the movie than I did. So what's the argument?

On *Pulp Fiction*, we do disagree. I said that it was a "vile movie" and that it "turned my stomach." He thinks it is about "proprieties and manners, redemption and renewal, divine intervention and retribution, the Last Four Things." Indeed, it is about "the state of one's soul." He thinks I'm a philistine with "a political agenda." I think he's been taken in by a technically accomplished, even brilliant, director who covers up, yes, *pulp fiction* with ironic (therefore beyond criticism) dabblings in pseudo-moral discourse.

Christians and Politics

The editorial "Truths and Untruths About the Catholic Alliance" (February) failed to persuade me that the Christian Coalition or its subsidiary the Catholic Alliance should be supported by Catholic voters. Grassroots realism was absent. . . .

Pat Robertson, president of the Christian Coalition and star of the *700 Club*, is an anti-Catholic bigot who labors under the delusion that God has chosen him to usher in the imminent second coming of Jesus Christ. He is also the acknowledged leader of the religious right and its holy war against the civil rights and the dignity of homosexual persons. . . .

Fifty million Catholic voters do not need Pat Robertson and his Catholic Alliance front organization to tell us who to vote for and what issues are best for the common good. We have our own alliance. It is called the Catholic Church.

Bernard V. Beronio
Sacramento, CA

After years of timidly peeking out from under their "seamless garment" to list "life issues" (abortion usually ranks fourth or fifth), our bishops now bravely stride forth with their statement on "Political Responsibility" to do battle with their ancient conservative foes.

As a Democrat since I worked in the Adlai Stevenson campaigns (I'm now in recovery), I of course supported all the Great Society programs. But after spending many years as a parent, an educator, a local officeholder, and the chairman of a crisis pregnancy center, I have watched those programs fail, one after the other.

I remember a time when bishops stayed out of politics and taught Catholic morality. Catholics respected them, went to Sunday Mass, and believed Catholic teaching. Yes, we too were sinners. But we knew we sinned, so there was the possibility of repentance.

Joseph Collison
Danielson, CT

In your editorial on the Catholic Alliance, I think you underestimate the significance of the Catholic bishops' earnest, heartfelt claim that canon law requires them to be solicitous for the proper use of the word "Catholic" by any organization. I for one am looking forward to their investigation of Catholics for a Free Choice and all those universities that claim to be in the "Catholic tradition." Let the games begin!

Matthew Carolan
National Review
New York, NY

The editors reply:

We understand that the bishops have declared publicly that Catholics for a Free Choice, a pro-abortion organization, is an abuse of the word "Catholic."

Cranky Critique

It was a surprise for the Friars of the Atonement to learn that the expression "experiment with tradition" caused such consternation in some quarters ("While We're At It," Public Square, January). The expression has been used for at least fifteen years. One might think that the critic himself (herself) was waiting for the expression to become a tradition. But timing aside, the critic would do well to read some time-honored books on the subject. The works of Yves Congar, O.P. come immediately to mind. There one will learn in depth that "tradition" is analogical and so one must be conscious of the subtlety of its various meanings. . . .

The tradition in question was the Franciscan tradition and the "experiment" referred to the adoption of the Franciscan Rule by a small group of Anglicans, an original and creative effort at the turn of the century. Obviously, the Rule needed to be adapted to fit the beliefs, customs, and practices of the Protestant Episcopal Church. . . .

The Friars and Sisters of the Atone-

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ment are proud of their history and draw inspiration from the courage and creativity manifested there to continue their life and ministries and to adapt them according to the needs of the church today.

This cranky critique of a vocation advertisement not only misrepresents the intentions of the Franciscan Friars and Sisters of the Atonement totally, but uses these misrepresentations as the reason for a paucity of numbers leading to the society's eventual demise. Anyone slightly familiar with the process of renewal in religious communities today, and with the Society of the Atonement in particular, would understand the absurdity of those conclusions. Indeed, the comments are so negative and vitriolic that one can only conclude that the writer is motivated by some hidden agenda. . . .

Emil F. Tomaskovic, S.A.
Minister General
Friars of the Atonement
Garrison, NY

RJN replies:

Oh, dear. And I thought the intended humor in my tweaking would be obvious. Just as I thought it obvious that anyone named Richard John would be assumed to be male. Little did I know that things had gone so far. Make that a double, please.

Unholy Ghostwriting?

The appearance in the same issue of FIRST THINGS (January) of Richard John Neuhaus' piece on "He Who Steals My Words . . ." and a review of Chuck Colson's recent novel, *Gideon's Torch*, provides a good opportunity to explore the issue of ghostwriting, misrepresentation, and unacknowledged borrowing within the Christian community.

Neuhaus reports that he provides sources for anything he is aware of borrowing. Colson and some other Christian leaders should do the same. The unsigned review of *Gideon's Torch* begins, "Charles Colson is a great Christian witness, minister to the imprisoned, champion of unity, and defender of the helpless, born and unborn." My wife and I agree so much with these sentiments that we have long supported Colson's ministry with our donations. However, a red flag was raised in my mind when I noticed further into the review that the book credited to Colson was actually "written with Ellen Vaughn." Now I have to wonder how much of the novel is actually Colson's. Why? Apparently Colson does not actually write all the commentaries he reads during his radio programs, since I have seen advertisements soliciting writers of such commentaries. Does he write all of the commentaries that appear under his name in *Christianity Today* and elsewhere?

There are other angles to this. . . . Recently, the producer for a well known evangelical conducted an interview with me. Imagine my surprise when I happened to tune in the interview on the radio and heard myself in a discussion with the prominent evangelist instead of his producer. The evangelist simply asked the same questions I had been asked by the producer, and my replies were electronically inserted into the tape. . . .

The BBC's shortwave radio broadcasts state, "The news is read by . . .", an indirect but proper way of acknowledging that the actual copy was written by a news staff. It has long been accepted practice for politicians, corporate presidents, and newscasters not to acknowledge the writers of the speeches and copy they read, and everyone knows comics hire gag writers. But Christians should be held to a higher standard. There should be no ghostwriting and altered interviews in Christianity. . . . If Charles Colson is too busy to write his commentaries, then he should tell us who wrote them for him. . . .

Forrest M. Mims III
Seguin, TX

Charles W. Colson replies:

Let me deal first with *Gideon's Torch*. The idea of the novel was mine, the moral questions raised in it were my questions—but I decided to write it with my long-time colleague, Ellen Vaughn, who is a very gifted story-teller. (Please note, contrary to Mr. Mims' assertion, the cover does not say *with* Ellen Vaughn, it says *and* Ellen Vaughn, a significant difference.) Ellen and I divided the labors from the beginning with each of us doing about half of the first drafts. Then we swapped drafts back and forth, edited, rewrote, and thoroughly collaborated throughout the process. The book is what its cover represents it to be, a book by two authors who worked jointly.

As in my previous books, I have always indicated when I have worked with another writer in any capacity. *The Body* was written by Charles Colson with Ellen Santilli Vaughn. That was not a fully collaborative role but rather Ellen did a lot of research, drafting, and some of the lengthy stories. Usually in the acknowledgments of my books I have indicated who wrote what. Never was this clearer than in *Kingdoms in Conflict*, where in the acknowledgments I specifically listed the individuals who wrote the first drafts of any chapters or did editing.

I've been as meticulous as I possibly could in this regard, so much so that Len Goss and Don Aycock, who did an analysis of Christian publishing and wrote *Inside Religious Publishing* for Zondervan, concluded that I established the "standard of excellence" for Christian writers by being so forthcoming.

As for columns that appear in *Christianity Today* or sometimes in secular publications, the ideas invariably are mine. I do use research help and do have extensive collaboration from people in the Prison Fellowship team. When *CT* wrote an article about the tenth anniversary of my publishing a regular column for them, David Neff noted that I always credited others, specifically Nancy Pearcey and Ellen Vaughn.

The situation with radio is more difficult. Actually there are several people who contribute draft scripts, in most cases based on my ideas. In every case I produce the final draft. In this situation it is more difficult to acknowledge. It would be a bit awkward, for example, to start a radio program saying: "I'm drawing today on ideas by Michael Novak, Nancy

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Pearcey, Edward Veith, and Billy Graham, and Tim Dailey edited the draft." Often I draw from a number of sources, but if I'm adopting anyone's idea, I always make that very clear in the body of the commentary.

Frankly, I don't know what else I could do. The important thing, it seems to me, is that I have never disguised anyone else's participation. On the contrary, I've advertised it. I'm grateful for it and want to see credit given where credit is due.

Not a Cult

While I was pleased to read your praise of Richard Weaver ("While We're At It," Public Square, February), I was appalled to see you refer to Agrarianism, a movement that has produced some of the finest writers of the twentieth century, as a "cult." I suppose that makes John Crowe Ransom the David Koresh of the movement and Allen Tate its Rev. Moon. You suggest your argument is primarily with their successors. Who? M. E. Bradford (whose banishment from the mainstream of American intellectual life is a scandal for which neoconservatives—not leftists—are responsible) or Clyde Wilson? I suspect you have in mind the honorable intellectual project centered on *Chronicles* magazine—hardly a cult. It is not my intention to defend them here: suffice to say it was a cheap shot at a movement of great intellectual power and real contemporary relevance.

Robert Alpert
Watertown, MA

Race and Discrimination

I am writing to respond to Richard Neuhaus' extended article on race ("Counting By Race," Public Square, February). I want to focus on two issues: rational discrimination and white racism.

First, in reviewing Dinesh D'Souza's book, Father Neuhaus writes approvingly of D'Souza's thesis that discrimination against black Americans can be rational. D'Souza's argument seems to be the following: (1) Young black males are disproportionately involved in criminal activity; (2) Any individual young black male is statistically likely to be involved in criminal activity; (3) Therefore, a white person is rationally justified in assuming that an individual young black male is involved in criminal activity. Although I do not think that the premises of this argument are true, let's assume that they are sound. Moreover, let's assume also that the conclusion follows deductively from the premises.

Even if we accept this conclusion, the argument fails to establish that discrimination is *morally justifiable.* Take a white high school teacher who teaches in a predominantly black school. If D'Souza and Neuhaus are right, a large percentage of her male students are involved in criminal activity. Is she, therefore, *morally* justified in assuming that any individual male student she encounters for the first time is involved in criminal activity? . . . D'Souza and Neuhaus equate statistical rationality with morality. This may be appropriate for modern game theorists. However, as Christians we are not governed by statistical rationality; we are governed by substantive moral principle or virtues which require that we not discriminate against individuals on the basis of alleged group characteristics.

Second, Fr. Neuhaus notes that "almost all relevant studies" have shown that white racism "has dramatically declined and is today effectively ostracized." However, he offers no empirical evidence to support this claim. Clearly, if pollsters ask whites if they are racists, they will respond in the negative. However, more sophisticated surveys indicate that many white Americans continue to harbor negative images about black Americans. For example, in a 1990 study, Tom W. Smith of the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center demonstrated that many whites believe that blacks are lazier and less intelligent than whites and other minority groups.

Fr. Neuhaus' failure to address this data is not a minor oversight; it informs his entire article. For example, he claims incredibly that race consciousness has "generated new and potentially greater racial suspicion and hostility than we had before the Montgomery bus boycott of 1965." If we are so racially polarized, and yet whites are virtually free of racism, then the implication is that blacks are creating racial polarization. In fact, Fr. Neuhaus accuses blacks of racism, and alleges that civil rights leaders and proponents of affirmative action have *caused* whites to respond negatively. We can agree that affirmative action polarizes blacks and white. Moreover, we can and should affirm the rather obvious claim that blacks can be racist. However, Fr. Neuhaus asks us to believe the untenable thesis that white racism is no longer part of the problem.

Derek S. Jeffreys
Chicago, IL

RJN replies:

"Rational discrimination" simply means that there is a greater frequency or probability of danger when encountering black males of a certain age and demeanor. There is nothing immoral about taking that into account and being careful. That's no doubt what the Rev. Jesse Jackson meant when he said that he is relieved when he discovers that the two young men walking toward him on a dark street turn out to be white and well dressed. I certainly do not ask Mr. Jeffreys or anyone else to believe "the untenable thesis that white racism is no longer part of the problem." I did not and do not advance any such thesis. Another big part of the problem is the misrepresentation of what people write on the difficult subject of race.

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY
Prison Fellowship in Reston, VA seeks Senior Editor for Chuck Colson's radio broadcast, "BreakPoint," to edit/write commentaries, direct production, and manage staff & contract writers. BreakPoint critiques the modern culture and argues persuasively for a biblical worldview. Requires 8 yrs. exper. editing/writing; strong administrative skills; and educational background in apologetics, philosophy, theology or related field. Send resume to: P.O. Box 17500 Washington, DC 20041-0500.

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FIRST THINGS
MAY 1996

The Ninth Circuit's Fatal Overreach

On March 6 in the federal Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco, a decision came down that could provoke a national battle greater than anything since the infamous *Roe v. Wade* decision of 1973. On the other hand, in relentlessly extending the fatal logic of *Roe*, the decision could be an instance of judicial overreach that turns out to be fatal to a whole series of court decisions that are in service to the culture of death. Overturning an earlier 2-1 panel decision written by one of its members, Judge John Noonan, the Ninth Circuit ruled that the Constitution guarantees a "liberty right" to assisted suicide. At issue was a Washington State law forbidding assisted suicide. The Ninth Circuit decision, written by Judge Stephen Reinhardt, was backed by an 8-3 majority.

As *Roe* surprised abortion proponents in the breadth of its sweep, so also "right to die" advocates have expressed surprise at how far the Ninth Circuit has gone. Others express alarm. In light of this decision, said Burke Balch of the National Right to Life Committee, "The so-called right to die will quickly become the duty to die." The American Medical Association was also taken aback, and reasserted its position that assisting a suicide is "fundamentally incompatible with the physician's role as healer and care-giver." Bioethicist Arthur Caplan of the University of Pennsylvania, a much-quoted "moderate" on these questions, was not prepared for the Ninth Circuit's pronunciamento. "It's as though we didn't learn anything from thirty years of abortion fighting. If anyone thinks they're going to settle anything morally from a court decision, they're nuts. And as a matter of public policy, it puts us in the bizarre situation of staggering toward becoming a society that guarantees the right to die at the hand of a physician with no right to treatment at the hand of a physician."

Nothing daunted, Judge Reinhardt and the majority of his colleagues declared that their decision is firmly grounded in the "powerful precedent" of the abortion rulings of the Supreme Court, and they are right about that. The Ninth Circuit cites the notorious "mystery passage" of the 1992 *Casey* decision in which the Supreme Court pronounced that the abortion license is "central to personal dignity and autonomy," noting that in our constitutional order there are no moral truths except those contrived by individuals to explain the mystery of the universe and their place in it. The Supreme Court said that procuring an abortion is one of "the most intimate and personal choices a person may make in a lifetime," and the Ninth Circuit applies that to suicide, noting that it is intimate, personal, and uniquely final. The Constitution, the court said, guarantees the liberty to make that decision and help in executing it.

The Ninth Circuit includes a number of states (Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, and Nevada) that have laws prohibiting assisted suicide, and the decision may also doom the suit against an Oregon vote that made it the only state in the Union permitting assisted suicide. The March 6 decision will almost certainly be appealed to the Supreme Court, which may then have to confront the moral and legal logic of its abortion precedents, most particularly that of *Casey*. At the time of the *Casey* decision, scholars pointed out that it was an open-ended invitation to create new licenses to kill, and it would seem that the Ninth Circuit has simply acted on that invitation. Thus the judicial imperialism of the Ninth Circuit is forcing the hand of the judicial imperialism of the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court will face the difficult task of explaining why its abortion precedents do not invite the conclusion drawn by the Ninth Circuit.

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That could lead to a modification or overturning of those precedents. If, on the other hand, the Supreme Court upholds the Ninth Circuit, the battle over abortion would likely be transformed into near unconditional warfare against the arrogance of courts that short-circuit democratic deliberation by the imposition of their moral (or grossly immoral) dictates. Make no mistake, the Ninth Circuit has thrown down the gauntlet to the people and legislatures of nine states, and by implication to the entire country.

Unlike 1973, there is today well-organized opposition to the course mandated by the Ninth Circuit. Not only the pro-life movement, but the bulk of the medical profession as well as Congress, state legislatures, and other courts have declared against the putative right to doctor-assisted suicide. Challenging Judge Stephen Reinhardt and other lawyers who play at being philosopher kings is the firm position of scholars who have over the years pondered this matter with great care. (See the Ramsey Colloquium statement, "Always to Care, Never to Kill," FT, February 1992.) The medical profession in particular is not eager to be made over in the image of Dr. Jack Kevorkian, and Americans recoil from the prospect of becoming a large scale Netherlands where thousands of old people are killed every year, with or without their consent.

As, by the grace of God, good can come from evil, the Ninth Circuit may have rendered a great service. It could compel the Supreme Court to reverse abortion precedents rightly invoked by the Ninth Circuit. It could prompt one or both political parties to call for an amendment making clear that there is no constitutional right to doctor-assisted suicide (the present abortion plank of the Republican platform already implies that). And if the Ninth Circuit decision is left standing or is upheld by the Supreme Court? Then many Christians, Jews, and others who care for moral truth and the integrity of this constitutional order will begin, many for the first time, to think long and painful thoughts about their allegiance to this political and legal regime.

The 1994 encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* spoke in very sobering tones about the obligation in conscience to resist unjust laws, and about the ways in which governments lose their moral claim to the obedience of the governed. Let it be said very carefully, calmly, and with no intention to incite: If the decision of the Ninth Circuit is declared the law of the land, our public life will move from widespread alienation and protest to open insurrection. No sensible person should welcome that prospect. But if it comes, the guilt will surely fall on judges who arrogated to themselves the political and moral authority that once belonged to the people of this democratic republic. History will show that, with that arrogation, the compact was broken, the consent of the governed was nullified, and this constitutional order was undone. The hopeful alternative is that the reckless presumption of the Ninth Circuit will provoke a long overdue reconstitution of the judiciary as the servant of the law and not the master of a people who were once free and are determined, one must hope, to be so again. FT

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THIS TIME

The End of Neoconservatism

James Nuechterlein

Everybody, it seems, is pronouncing the death of neoconservatism—including, most significantly, the two people most responsible for its existence in the first place, Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz.

Kristol has done so in his recent *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea* (Free Press) and Podhoretz follows suit in the March issue of *Commentary* with his essay "Neoconservatism: A Eulogy." In neither case does the eulogy take on the character of an elegy: for both men, neoconservatism departs the scene not because it has failed but because it has, in large part at least, succeeded in what it set out to accomplish.

Putting the question of success or failure aside for the moment, is it true to say that neoconservatism is dead? I suspect it is—it would seem impertinent, to say the least, to argue with the founding fathers on the point—but I do want to complicate the argument just a bit.

First, some history is in order. Neoconservatism came into being mainly as a byproduct of the disintegration of the left in the late 1960s. The neocons were for the most part disillusioned liberals (or radicals) who broke with their former allies over what they considered the febrile, guilt-ridden anti-Americanism embraced by much of the left in the wake of the anti-Vietnam War movement. (A great many neoconservatives—Podhoretz notable among them—participated in the early days of the antiwar movement but parted from it in its latter radical stages.) As Podhoretz puts it, "Neoconservatism came into the world to combat the dangerous lies that were being spread by the radicalism of the sixties and that were being accepted as truth by the established liberal institutions of the day." The neoconservatives, one might say, established themselves as the adversaries of the adversary culture.

The neocons (most of whom came to accept the term only under duress) brought to the right a measure of the intellectual recognition it had previously lacked. Prior to the neoconservatives' emergence, liberals for the most part dealt with intellectual challenges from the right by not dealing with them, by ignoring conservative arguments and the people who made them. It was harder for liberals to disregard the neoconservatives, who had gained intellectual recognition while still on the left and who therefore could not so easily be treated as if they were not there. Neoconservative critiques of the left achieved a visibility and thus an influence that earlier criticisms—notably those of William F. Buckley, Jr. and his colleagues at *National Review*—had not.

Relations between the Buckley conservatives and the neocons were, at first, often distant and uncomfortable. The two groups had different histories, different intellectual styles, different preoccupations. Many in the Buckley group (though not Buckley himself) treated the neoconservatives as interlopers and tended to suspect them of closet liberal sympathies—which, given the way the *National Review* of those days defined such things, was not an entirely unfounded suspicion. Many neoconservatives, for their part, could not accustom themselves to regarding as allies people whom all their lives they had considered beyond the bounds of intellectual respectability.

Neoconservatives differed with traditional conservatives on a number of issues, of which the three most important, in my view, were the New Deal, civil rights, and the nature of the Communist threat. On the New Deal, neoconservatives wanted not to dismantle the welfare/regulatory state, as did most traditionalists, but simply to prevent its infinite expansion, as in the programs of the Great Society. On civil rights, all neocons were enthusiastic supporters of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965, while the *National Review* was suspicious of King and opposed to federal legislation forbidding racial discrimination.

As to communism, traditionalists and neocons were both ardent anti-Communists; but where neocons focused on the danger of external aggression, traditionalists worried more about the threat of internal subversion—and, as Podhoretz notes, "They were not, to put it gently, always scrupulous in distinguishing among the various factions on the left." The *National Review* conservatives were, in most cases, zealous defenders of Senator Joe McCarthy; the neoconservatives considered him a political thug whose demagoguery had severely damaged the anti-Communist cause.

Over the years, the distance between the two camps on these (and other) issues has narrowed considerably. On the New Deal and the role of government, the movement has come mainly from the neoconservative side. As Podhoretz says, "By now most neoconservatives have pretty well given up on the welfare state." (Though I have yet to meet a neoconservative who considers himself a libertarian.) On civil rights, it is the traditionalists who have shifted ground. They mostly support, in retrospect, the early Civil Rights Acts, and they join with the neoconservatives in favorably contrasting Dr. King's vision of a color-blind society with the balkanizing quota schemes of today's civil rights establishment.

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Finally, of course, divisions among anti-Communists have long since disappeared and McCarthyism remains an issue only in textbooks.

This pattern of convergence means that neoconservatism has lost its ideological distinctiveness. As Kristol observes, the children of neocons—the non-rebellious ones at least—think of themselves simply as "conservatives without adjectival modification." Neither Kristol nor Podhoretz finds grounds for regret in that. Neoconservatives have lost their particularity but won their war. Communism is dead and the left is in disarray. Podhoretz happily concludes: "I think we can claim that the defense the neoconservatives mounted of American society and its traditional values against the frontal assaults of the counterculture ended with a victory that in its own modest way resembled the victory of the West over communism in the Cold War."

It is not surprising, in retrospect, that things should have turned out as they did. Although neoconservatives originally hoped to exercise influence among liberals—their first institutional incarnation, after all, was as the Coalition for a *Democratic* Majority—the direction of their movement, from the time it targeted the New Left as the enemy, was always to the right. And once Ronald Reagan won the presidency and made conservatism the political establishment, traditionalist conservatives dropped their sectarian mentality and met the neocons coming the other way.

Podhoretz somewhat misreads Reagan's role in all this. Podhoretz says that "Reagan can . . . be considered one of the first neoconservatives." In fact, few if any neoconservatives were early supporters of Reagan, whom they correctly viewed as a traditionalist conservative with strong libertarian leanings. Prior to 1980, most neoconservatives regarded him with a combination of condescension and mistrust. Once he was nominated, however—and even more once he was elected—virtually all of them drifted, at varying rates of speed and with varying degrees of enthusiasm, to his support. It was the Reagan presidency that, in its continuous warfare with the left, consolidated the various schools of conservatism into a more-or-less unified, and more-or-less successful, ideological coalition. And in the process eliminated *neo*conservatism's reason for being.

Not everyone concedes the death of neoconservatism. The so-called paleoconservatives—an odd amalgam of extreme libertarians, isolationists, anti-Vatican II Catholics, and unreconstructed defenders of the Southern Confederacy—find *their* reason for being in endless denunciations of the neoconservatives, and of the *National Review* traditionalists for having sold out to them. The idea of neoconservatism as a liberal plot to highjack conservatism for the left might seem hopelessly dated—the social democratic wing of neoconservatism disappeared long ago—but it remains vibrantly alive in the pages of journals like *Chronicles* and in the imaginations of ideologues attracted to the candidacy of Pat Buchanan.

I find myself in the perverse position of wishing the paleocons were more right than they are in insisting on neoconservative distinctiveness. And I suspect I am not alone.

More than a few of us who came of intellectual age in the late 1950s and early 1960s found ourselves politically isolated. We did not identify comfortably with either the liberal or conservative communities of the time. We were, in shorthand terms, neither *New Republic* nor *National Review*. Then along came Kristol's new *Public Interest* and, a few years later, Podhoretz's reconfigured *Commentary*, journals that redefined the possibilities of American politics and offered intellectual shelter to those of us who had been ideologically homeless.

The 1990s are not the 1960s, and Kristol and Podhoretz are right to emphasize the differences. Their journals are still there, but they no longer stand alone. *Commentary* and *National Review* are far more alike than they were then, and the differences that remain do not fit neat ideological categories.

Still, it is more than nostalgia that prompts the wish that the neoconservative impulse might remain alive. The neoconservatives were appalled by what had become of liberalism, but they understood that to break entirely with the liberal tradition would be to break with the American experiment. They were combative but not sectarian. They quarreled with modernity without supposing they could act as if modernity had not occurred. Perhaps most importantly, they fought the utopian illusions of the left without succumbing to a counter-utopianism. They were principled, but they resisted the notion that politics consists mainly of maintaining an ideological paradigm.

These elements of the neoconservative temper retain their relevance even if neoconservatism as a program does not—and any conservatism worth defending will want to hold on to them even when neoconservatism exists only in memory. FT

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Opinion

Teaching Christian Humanism

Virgil Nemoianu

Once we've denounced the balderdash that all too often passes for teaching in contemporary American colleges, there still remains the question of what we ought to teach instead. Indignation is an insufficient alternative to the brutal secularization of the college curriculum. But some conservative commentators, after narrating all the outrageous anecdotes, seem baffled for a positive program of cultural education, and others even seem positively anticultural—as though willing to admit that the ideologies of the secularists are what constitute the humanities.

The opposite is, of course, the actual case: the humanities were born of—and, by right, still belong to—a Christian religious tradition. They have always had as their goal the reconciliation between human solidarity on the one hand and the dignity of individual, concrete persons, situations, and facts on the other. The possibility of religious transcendence was "always already" (to speak with the deconstructionists) part of the whole project.

This is why we urgently need college courses today on Christian humanism. Some students will undoubtedly mistrust the humanism of such classes, and many more will mistrust their Christianity. But Christian humanism is properly nothing but a reclaiming of the basic inheritance of our history and the natural connection of culture with the religious vistas of the human being. The current separation is the artificial relation, not the other way around. My own suggestions for a syllabus of Christian humanism are certainly not cast in stone. I mean them more as a spur to further reflection than as a map. I, for one, would try to tell my students most of the following.

What came to be called "Christian humanism" is rooted primarily in the Gospels of Luke and John. The Lucan text is addressed to a more cultivated public than the other synoptic gospels; the Johannine Gospel, too, is a highly intellectual text, combining the spiritual, symbolic, and factual. Once it became apparent that the Second Coming was not as near as many early Christians had supposed, it became imperative for Christians to construct a framework for handling the world and its culture, and it was primarily to these Gospels that they turned.

The rudiments of the consequent Christian philosophy, theology, and art were already in place by the late third century: Christians could boast of Origen, for instance, a powerful intellect by any standard. But many Mediterranean intellectuals nonetheless feared that Christianity would endanger the aesthetic amenities and social balances that had been assured by Roman religion, and it is as though the entire Christian world collectively decided to meet its adversaries on their own ground. We witness between the years 350 and 450 an extraordinary explosion of Christian intellectual achievement. While Jerome was translating the Bible into Latin, Athanasius was helping formulate the Profession of Faith, and the first great Church orator, John Chrysostom, was preaching. Toward the end of this century Augustine began to acquire his reputation, while in Milan Ambrose displayed his extraordinary combination of managerial power and spiritual depth. I would have my own students pay special attention to the Cappadocians—Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzen, and Gregory of Nyssa—because, more than anyone else, they engaged their polytheistic rivals on their own terrain by appropriating Neoplatonism (the "Summa" of the Ancients, so to speak) and Christianizing it.

This appropriation of Neoplatonism, culminating with the Pseudo-Dionysius and Maximus the Confessor, allowed Christian thinkers to incorporate into their thought such Neoplatonic features as the primacy of beauty and the metaphysics of descent and ascent, and thereby to lay the philosophical foundations of nearly all future Christian humanism. But the *pattern* of appropriation is what I would want my students to notice most, for it is the typical and fundamental gesture of Christian humanism: to respond to the world by taking it over, by embracing it, by showing that no beauty, intelligence, or goodness is alien to Christianity or incompatible with it.

The Middle Ages brought about a great flowering of Christian culture: the cathedrals and the philosophical systems (especially in Thomas Aquinas), as well as Christianity's development of social structures. One German scholar, Gerhard Nebel, speaks of the *kairos* of Christian art: the moment of nearest approach between the divine and the artistic, when simultaneously the Romanesque style appeared in the West and the art of the icon appeared in the East. Christian humanism remained vivid, in Albertus Magnus' encyclopedic mind, for instance, or in the formidable figure of Hildegard of Bingen. I would wish my students to see at least two movements of the Middle Ages—that of the great mystics and that of the Franciscans—as exemplifying Christian human-

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ism in several important features. The mystics (many of them women) brought together the sentimental and the rational in extraordinary ways, while the Franciscans, and Bonaventure in particular, brought to high medieval culture their love of nature and the beautiful.

Louis Bouyer, himself one of the great Christian humanists of our own age, wrote in 1959 a book about Erasmus and his times that remains as good an introduction to later Christian humanism as any I know; another good introduction is the book by Henri de Lubac about the times of Pico della Mirandola. The figures examined in these two studies may well represent the peak of Christian humanism. They include Nicholas of Cusa and Thomas More, the Popes Eugene IV, Nicholas V, Pius II, and Paul III, Cardinals Pole, Contarini, Barberini, Bessarion, and many others. Protestants, particularly in seventeenth-century England, developed their own tradition, informed by John Donne, George Herbert, and Izaak Walton.

When historians use the term in a narrow sense, "Christian humanism" refers exclusively to the Renaissance—often presented as a departure from Christianity, or even anti-Christian. The actual histories of the Renaissance thinkers, however, suggest exactly the opposite. Thomas More was ready to die for his beliefs, Pico went so far as to approach Savonarola toward the end of his short life, and Erasmus stubbornly and ingeniously pursued a course between personal independence and a refusal to abandon tradition. In the Renaissance we witness a new attempt at the Cappadocian gambit: an appropriation of the cultural achievements of the Ancient world, of Platonism in particular, as well as a dramatically heightened presence of the Church in the world of culture. The humanism of the Renaissance was in many ways limited to the elite, and thus differs from the more popular sweep of Medieval efforts. But Renaissance humanism strongly affirmed Christianity's capacity to be inclusive and to reclaim areas in which its universality could shine forth again.

At this point in the course, I would want my students to grasp what was just beginning to become clear to the Renaissance humanists themselves: that there are fundamental commonalities between humanistic culture and Christianity that bring them together objectively, irrespective of the wishes and plans of writers, artists, and intellectuals. Christianity's concept of the Trinity posited from the beginning a tremendous abundance of activities inside God's nature and a great variety of relations with the created world. On a closer look, "cultural production" was in its turn trying to do the same: stake out a territory of freedom, openness, and creativity. Or, even better, it was trying to imitate on a finite scale the infinite creative and gratuitous freedom of God. A humanity created in God's "image and likeness" was following the God of Genesis: incessantly creating new possibilities for the universe in architecture, music, verse, and philosophy. The humanity of Christian humanism was trying to supplement in its modest way the majestic gestures of original Creation.

No less suggestive is Holy Tradition, the continuing work of the Holy Spirit. Briefly put, there is in the Church's life a special connection between stability and expansion, growth and continuity. This, of course, as much as anything else, could serve as a model for the pursuit and the shaping of the beautiful and of intellectual speculation in the secular world on the basis of common outlines.

Other commonalities can be easily enumerated. Suffice it to say that they were all wrapped up in two large realities. The first is that all human societies contain a kind of opening toward transcendence; the relationship between the human person and God is constitutive and unavoidable. The second is the equally incontestable fact that culture is derived from and connected to religion: architecture to temples of worship, drama to religious ritual, universities to acquiring sacred knowledge, music, sculpture and painting to the praise of the divine, indeed science and political economy themselves to categories generated by divine stories.

By the end of the eighteenth century, knowledge of these commonalities was widespread and accepted by nearly everyone, even the emerging skeptics, agnostics, and lukewarm believers. It was thus around this date that Christian humanism took on its current form—due in large measure to Chateaubriand, who invented a modern idiom in which the great harmonies of the world could be spoken. In his *Genius of Christianity* (1803), the beautiful emerges as an indispensable key to any grasp of the true and the good. The amazing appeal of Chateaubriand derives from his ability to turn the privileging of nature (the great innovation at the end of the eighteenth century) into an argument for sacrality, and to legitimize the spheres of the emotional and the aesthetic as valid replacements for those of the rational and the social.

Chateaubriand was, of course, not alone. Many German and some English Romantics, especially Coleridge, worked through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries toward forging this alliance between the beautiful and the world of religion. The Swiss Alois Gugler, today virtually forgotten, argued that biblical writing was the prototype of any sublime expression. The Catalan Jaime Balmes engaged directly the philosophies of history of his time, and his contemporary Donoso Cortes argued that politics derives from theology. The Oxford Tractarians altered the religious landscape of England for almost a century. Schleiermacher reinvented hermeneutic analysis starting from religious principles. Lamennais and Görres demonstrated how crucial religious concepts could operate in the context of social and

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national preoccupations.

It would be idle to deny the crisis of Christianity in the twentieth century. But I could not allow my students to overlook the enormous resurgence of original intellectual thought and artistic creativity associated with Romano Guardini, Joseph Pieper, Jacques Maritain, Henry Bremond, Jean Danielou, Lubac, Lonergan, Rahner, Claudel, Péguy, Chesterton, Waugh, Flannery O'Connor, and Walker Percy on the Catholic side. Or with Eliot, Auden, C. S. Lewis, Barth, Reinhold Niebuhr, Vladimir Solovyov, Lossky, and Bulgakov, not to mention Unamuno, Simone Weil, Berdyaev, and Leo Chestov—and these are only a small number among those connected closely with the continuing tradition of Christian humanism. I think, however, that I would concentrate my students' gaze on Hans Urs von Balthasar. His work offers a kind of summa of this revival of Christian humanism, for he tried to bring together the insights of most of these thinkers. Balthasar provided historical outlines of the Catholic tradition in culture, and he strove toward erecting an explanatory system for ordering the rather individualistic views of many of his predecessors. Significantly, his system resorted to the aesthetic, dramatic, and symphonic to communicate a tentative synthesis of Christian humanism.

For the Christian humanists, culture is a kind of tumbling ground for the spiritual, the social, the historical, and the psychological. Culture mediates in some important way between the creaturely and the divine, and aesthetics is the attempt to articulate the opening toward transcendence. If God is seen as primarily the Creator, then the fullest imitation of God must be in creative activity. One purpose of my course in Christian humanism would be to introduce my students to a fundamental strand of Western intellectual history. But a greater purpose would be to reveal to them—and to allow them to discover in themselves—the foundation of all humanism on the insights of Christian faith.

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Patenting Life: Yes

Ted Peters

An item I had once thought to be a theological nonissue has over the last year been built up into a pseudo-issue, namely, gene patenting. Despite my meager protestations to the contrary, this nonissue has become a public issue of growing consequence not only for the scientists and lawyers among us but also for the religious community.

A theological bomb was dropped on May 18, 1995 at a press conference in Washington, D.C. in which a group of religious leaders—who claim to have collected signatures of nearly 180 individuals representing eighty different faiths or denominations—called for a ban on the patenting of human genes and genetically engineered animals. Advance press leaks led to a front-page story in which the *New York Times* (May 13, 1995) described the event as "a passionate new battle over religion and science." Along with Jeremy Rifkin, who heads the Foundation on Economic Trends, the signers of the Joint Appeal Against Human and Animal Patenting included Rabbi David Saperstein, Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism; Abdurahman Alamoudi, Executive Director of the American Muslim Council; Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, Secretary General of the Reformed Church in America; Richard D. Land, President of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention; and Kenneth Carder and Jaydee Hanson of the United Methodist Church. "By turning life into patented inventions," said Rifkin, "the government drains life of its intrinsic nature and sacred value."

During the last year the controversy has begun to take form. Two scientific groups, the Human Genome Organization and the Council for Responsible Genetics, have both taken stands against patenting knowledge of naturally occurring DNA sequences. Under the leadership of Audrey Chapman and Mark Frankel, the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Washington is attempting to broker the discussion between the scientific community, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries, and the religious leaders who issued the Joint Appeal. President Clinton is now in the process of appointing a fifteen-member National Bioethics Advisory Commission with two agenda items: the rights of human subjects in research and, you guessed it, gene patenting.

My concern here is by no means simply to defend the practice of patenting intellectual knowledge of the human genome or new life forms. The larger issue is this: when religious leaders enter into this public debate they should employ sound theology combined with a minimal understanding of the science and an accurate knowledge of just what is and what is not patentable. Unfortunately, the theologians tied to the Joint Appeal coalition flunk when measured by these criteria.

The Joint Appeal begins with a clear theological affirmation:

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> We, the undersigned religious leaders, oppose the patenting of human and animal life forms. We are disturbed by the U.S. Patent Office's recent decision to patent human body parts and several genetically engineered animals. We believe that humans and animals are creations of God, not humans, and as such should not be patented.

The nicest thing I can say about this is that it affirms God's creation. Beyond that, it is nonsense. It artificially separates divine creation from human creativity. It inadvertently cedes the natural world to functional naturalists such as Jeremy Rifkin, who has no stake in the religious traditions represented. Rifkin, whose foundation orchestrated the Joint Appeal press event, takes as his mission the "resacralization of nature." In theological contrast, Christians and Jews believe in a holy God who creates a world out of love, asks us to love this creation, and asks us to be stewards of our God-given creativity to make this world a better place. Nature itself is not sacred. God is. There is no theological warrant for leaving nature unaltered and leaving a giant portion of the human race to suffer from debilitating diseases that might be overcome by the advance of genetically based medicines.

Rabbi David Saperstein, one of the coalition leaders, stated at a meeting I attended that we are creatures of God living in God's creation and that it is our responsibility to reduce human suffering and thereby make the world a better place. Now, that's good theology in my book. Why is it ignored by the Joint Appeal?

By ignoring sound theology the Joint Appeal is blessing an anti-science and anti-technology philosophy with a vague religious baptism. The *New York Times* quoted Richard D. Land, one of the key signatories of the Joint Appeal, describing "altering life forms, creating new life forms, as a revolt against the sovereignty of God and an attempt to be God." Quite the contrary, such scientific advance in the service of reducing suffering is a healthy exercise of human creativity.

In addition to unsound theological reasoning and a failure to see how scientific research and medical development can serve our stewardship of creation, the Joint Appeal works with misleading assumptions regarding what can and cannot be patented. The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office does not patent things that exist naturally, such as the human genome. It grants intellectual property rights on human ingenuity that meets three criteria: novelty, nonobviousness, and utility. What is invented is patentable. What already exists in nature is not. Nor, despite widespread propaganda to the contrary, does the PTO patent human beings or body parts. No persons get patented. This would violate the U.S. Constitution's proscription against slavery. Rather, the PTO grants patents for cell lines and even genomes of transgenic animals that are used in biological research for the purpose of developing medical therapies for genetically based diseases such as cancer, heart disease, cystic fibrosis, Alzheimer's, Huntington's, Wilson's Syndrome, and eventually perhaps four thousand other diseases. Such patents draw venture capital for this extremely risky and expensive process of research and development. This is an area of ethical concern, to be sure, and one that deserves careful and informed deliberation by our religious leaders. It does not deserve categorical dismissal.

My deepest regret is that our religious leaders are looking at the smoke and missing the fire. The advance of genetic research is about to ignite a firestorm of new social and ethical problems in our society, and we need to enlist our best theological minds to analyze those problems.

What are the ethical issues that genetics research will ignite or fuel? First is the threat of genetic discrimination. The development of tests for genetic predispositions to disease may identify an expanded category of pre-existing conditions. Because medical care is connected to private insurance and to employment, we can expect thousands if not millions of people to discover suddenly that they are uninsurable and hence unemployable. This could create a new underclass—a genetic underclass—to add to the thirty-five million people already inadequately covered by medical insurance. If religious leaders want to show ethical concern regarding the implications of genetics, here is a problem crying out for immediate attention.

Genetic discrimination will be closely followed by numerous other problems such as selective abortion. As prenatal testing expands, we can forecast wholesale aborting of fetuses that do not meet genetic standards. This will be more than a moral issue for the parents in question. We can expect the insurance industry to demand abortion for potentially expensive babies. The result is likely to be market-driven eugenics.

There is also the knotty question of moral and legal responsibility for antisocial behavior for which some individuals have a genetic predisposition. If it can be shown that some persons are genetically predisposed toward alcoholism, aggression, or violence, will society consider them culpable for their actions? What will the courts do when those having committed crimes claim innocence on the grounds that "my genes made me do it"? And how will the logic of responsibility for our behavior help us to understand the implications of the 1993 discovery of what is possibly the "gay gene"?

Other ethical conundrums include the controversy over somatic therapy versus germ line intervention. Should we engage in genetic engineering that will influence the evolution of future generations? Finally, the scientific and legal communities are, as we have noted, already wrestling with the patent issue.

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On these matters, scientists and even the White House might appreciate some considered deliberation and ethical insight offered by theological thinkers. But if religious leaders are genuinely interested in taking up ethical issues facing our society over genetic research, they must realize that the agenda will be long, serious, and complicated.

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Patenting Life: No

Richard D. Land & C. Ben Mitchell

You do not have to be a religious zealot or a scientific Luddite to oppose the patenting of animal and human organisms and genes. In fact, as John Fletcher, ethicist at the University of Virginia, has said, "You don't have to be religious to realize that there ought to be a debate about patenting." It is true, however, that moral and theological concerns are at the heart of the debate.

We should be clear at the outset that we applaud and rejoice in many of the existing and potential uses of the new genetics. The treatment and cure of more than four thousand genetically linked illnesses are prima facie grounds for celebrating and endorsing some genetic technologies. Cures for diseases such as cystic fibrosis, breast cancer, Duchenne's muscular dystrophy, and colon cancer certainly merit both praise and the expenditure of significant financial resources.

At the same time, genetic technology is not an unmixed blessing. The potential abuses of genetic technology warrant our careful and considered attention. Linkages between genetic screening and abortion, testing and discrimination, and the supposedly positive and negative aspects of the discredited pseudo-discipline of eugenics represent important subjects meriting wider public discussion. No less important are the implications of patenting human genes and genetically engineered animals. Unfortunately, due to the rapid expansion of the technology, we do not have the luxury of discussing these issues in a leisurely manner or one at a time. The breathtaking pace of technological advancement requires that the cultural discourse and the public policy with respect to genetics must develop simultaneously.

Unfortunately, some policies have been enacted imprudently. Consequently, some policy decisions in these areas will have to be replaced with policies that reflect more careful and mature moral examination, however embarrassing or disconcerting that may be. Bad decisions make bad policy and should not be defended just because they have been made.

In *Diamond v. Chakrabarty* (1980), the Supreme Court ruled in a five-to-four vote that a genetically engineered microbe could be patented. Less than a decade later, in April 1988, the first animal patent was issued to Harvard University for the so-called "oncomouse." The patented mouse was genetically engineered to contain a cancer gene making it useful in human cancer research. E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Company was granted exclusive licensure "to practice the patent." According to the now defunded Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), the patent specifically covers "a transgenic nonhuman eukaryotic animal (preferably a rodent such as a mouse) whose germ cells and somatic cells contain an activated oncogene sequence introduced into the animal." That is to say, the patent was granted not only on a mouse and its progeny, but on *any mammal that has cancer genes inserted into its genome at an embryonic stage.* The mouse now reportedly sells for about fifty dollars.

While whole human beings have not been patented yet, human genetic material is routinely patented. In July 1990, the California Supreme Court ruled that a patient whose diseased spleen had been used to produce patented cell lines had no right to the millions of dollars potentially resulting from the sale of pharmaceutical products derived from his spleen. By September 4, 1993, the National Institutes of Health had filed for patents on 6,122 gene fragments. Although patenting of "gene fragments of unknown biological function" is presently disallowed, who knows what the future holds? Most of this territory is uncharted. Boston University Professor of Health Law George Annas has asked, "Since cloned human embryos are not persons protected by the Constitution and theoretically at least could be as 'immortal' as cloned cell lines, could a particularly 'novel' and 'useful' human embryo be patented, cloned, and sold?"

Our candid presupposition is that both humans and animals are more than the sum of their genetic code. In our view, genetic patenting of Homo sapiens is, however, a separate issue in some respects from patenting other organisms. Both are problematic, but for slightly different reasons.

Opposition to patenting human beings and their genetic parts is grounded in the unique nature of Homo sapiens. Human beings, alone among living organisms, bear the *imago Dei.* "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him" (Genesis 1:27). Human life is therefore sacred

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and possesses unique value derived from the Creator. Thus, as Philip Edgcumbe Hughes has said, "It is the image of God in which man was created, rather, which pervades his existence in its totality and is the cause of his transcendence over the rest of God's creation." The distinction between human life and animal life, as well as the prohibition against the unjustifiable taking of human life, is foundational to Jewish and Christian anthropology.

Human beings are pre-owned. We belong to the sovereign Creator. We are, therefore, not to be killed without adequate justification (e.g., in self-defense) nor are we, or our body parts, to be bought and sold in the marketplace. Yet the patenting of human genetic material attempts to wrest ownership from God and commodifies human biological materials and, potentially, human beings themselves. Admittedly, a single human gene or a cell line is not a human being; but a human gene or cell line *is* undeniably human and warrants different treatment than all nonhuman genes or cell lines. The image of God pervades human life in all of its parts. Furthermore, the right to own one part of a human being is *ceteris paribus* the right to own all the parts of a human being. This right must not be transferred from the Creator to the creature.

Imagine a society in which patented human cells, cell lines, and tissues are bought and sold in the scientific marketplace. If such a scenario seems impossible to conceive, consider that Nobel laureate Kary Mullis has bought the rights to extract a part of Elvis Presley's DNA from a lock of the rock idol's hair using a "genetic amplification" technique that Mullis himself invented. Mullis intends to make millions of copies of Presley's genes, according to a September 1995 *Washington Post* article, "and preserve these minuscule globs inside artificial gemstones, to be made into a line of necklaces, earrings, and other collectables." While Mullis' good sense may be questionable, the commodification of human genes is not inconceivable with only a naturalistic anthropology to guide genetic science.

We argue that the current status of U.S. patent law is incapable of dealing with the potential abuse of human genetic materials. When the framers of the Constitution established congressional power "to promote the progress of science and the useful arts, by securing for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries," it was impossible to envisage the patenting of human genetic materials. Even in 1952, when Congress passed the Patent Act, intending patentable subject matter to include "anything under the sun that is made by man," it is unlikely that they foresaw human "biopatents." We, therefore, conclude that human genetic materials should not be patentable matter.

We further maintain that a moratorium should be placed on animal patenting on slightly different grounds. In the case of animal patents, social justice issues rise to the fore. Animals, like human beings, are pre-owned entities. Every part of God's creation is owned by the Sovereign. Most Jews and Christians would, however, interpret the mandate of Genesis 1:28 to permit animal ownership. "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'" Responsible stewardship of the created order is not only allowed, it is imperative.

Under U.S. patent law, patentable subject matter is defined as "any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof." Rebecca S. Eisenberg, Professor of Law at the University of Michigan, observes that "although products of nature may not be patented as such, patents have been issued on such products in human-altered form." This is exceedingly troublesome in our view. Oncomice are, in fact, human-altered forms, but are they really "compositions of matter"? Do they truly constitute an "improvement thereof"?

Philosopher Ned Hettinger has rightly said, "There is a substantial disanalogy between these biopatents and the traditional subject matter of patents. Edison really did *invent* the light bulb. The Wright brothers *created* a flying machine. But Harvard did not *invent or create* the oncomouse. Biotechnicians alter, modify, assist, and manipulate nature. They are not inventors of novel organisms or genes that could be appropriate objects for patents."

In truth, the patent on the Harvard mouse constitutes a monopoly on an entire subclass of animal. Again, according to the OTA report, "The actual patent coverage is broad, embracing virtually any species of 'transgenic nonhuman mammal all of whose germ cells and somatic cells contain a recombinant activated oncogene sequence introduced into said mammal, or an ancestor of said mammal, at an embryonic stage.'" Since there are about forty known cancer-causing genes, the patent covers an indordinately wide variety of potentially patentable mammalian life.

While animal ownership per se is morally acceptable, patenting animals represents an abuse of the notion of ownership, and more importantly, of ownership rights. Patents presently protect the ownership rights of the patent holder. Changes in U.S. patent law were recently made under a new set of international trade rules, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. After June 8, 1995, "the term of a patent begins on the date of issue and ends twenty years from the original filing date," according to an article appearing in the *Scientist*. Since animals are patentable, biotech companies, universities, or indi-

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viduals may monopolize entire species or subclasses of animals and, as in the *Chakrabarty* decision, bacteria, for twenty years. In his superb discussion on this subject in *Toward a More Natural Science,* Leon Kass opines, "It is one thing to own *a* mule; it is another to own *mule.* Admittedly, bacteria are far away from mules. But the principles invoked, the reasoning, and the stance toward nature go all the way to mules, and beyond."

Bernard Rollin, professor of philosophy, physiology, and biophysics at Colorado State University, maintains that "the Patent Office rushed in where angels fear to tread. . . . The issuing of patents begs these questions or ignores them. It was a bureaucratic decision made in a value-free context (or value-ignoring context) by an agency that has notoriously avoided engaging the ethical and social issues raised by inventions like switchblades, assault rifles, shock collars, and devices for sadomasochists, an agency that judges applications only by the formal criteria of novelty, usefulness, and nonobviousness. It disavows concern with issues of safety; danger to humans, animals, or environment; or welfare of animals. The decision is, as it were, a punch line without a joke, an ending without a story. The decision to patent or not to patent should follow in the wake of a democratic social examination of the concerns discussed here, and in the wake of establishing a democratic regulatory mechanism for all aspects of genetic engineering of animals."

The explosion of our capabilities without a concomitant expansion of ethical reflection demands that we resist the temptation to apply unthinkingly every technology the day it is conceived. We need careful investigation of alternatives to human and animal patenting. A blind frenzy of patenting is far more dangerous than a strict prohibition. We need to strive for and cultivate measured judgments and restraint with respect to the new genetics.

Recognizing that a moratorium on patenting genes may put some potential treatments and cures for genetically linked illnesses at risk, we advise that Congress and other policy-making bodies encourage the kind of democratic social examination and cultural discourse about biopatents for which Bernard Rollin calls.

There are, of course, social justice issues beyond these to be explored with respect to biopatents. The fact that on May 18, 1995 some 180 leaders from diverse religious perspectives gathered together to call for a moratorium on patenting is evidence that wider and deeper discussion must take place between science, law, and religion.

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Jesus Matinees

Half past two Wednesdays Catholics
—a fair number—would rise up
in silence when their special

buzzer jolted our Queens
classroom, summons a good
hour before our scheduled

parole to their midweek Saint
Teresa's spiritual sparkle, a canny
swap of Byrd's tale of his *schlep*

over the Antarctic or Vasco de Gama's
spice routes for Jesus matinees.
As if aged or made wiser by this in-

cantation, they moved off with short
grainy strokes, an etiquette faith
associates with a seasoned squad

of pallbearers primed to meet
the threat of church front steep
slippery stairs, death's dance

swift bitsy two-step sole
shuffle spilling soft sand-
paper sounds on gathered grievers

below, cargo remaining aloft,
upright. "Early dismissal
for religious instruction,"

they call it. I envied them
their discharge before our
time and think of them now

in the wake of abrupt dismissal,
return tomorrow a fool's
gold dream, of my daughter, 24.

Saul Bennett

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The Future of Belief

Thomas Fitzgerald

I could start by announcing, "Western epistemology is in crisis!"—but most readers would find the line pretentious. The chatty alternative, "The world these days makes less sense," sounds nearly as trite as the journalistic, "People are a lot more cynical than they used to be," and I find myself hesitant to make what seems an extravagant claim: "A serious shift has occurred in *knowing* and *believing*, in the ways we see, take in, think about, and affirm the world."

Nonetheless, it has. Something has happened to belief—not religion's much disputed "loss of faith," but a shift in modes of cognitive activity. Abilities to distinguish, verify, and conclude are impaired. We still have our eyes and ears, of course. The instruments we use to extend them, however, not only deform indirect experience, but make direct apprehension seem narrow by comparison. As electronic media train us to see and hear in new ways, old ways fall into disuse, and one result is the odd epistemic mood that pervades our times. The Undecidability Principle seems to have seeped from physics into everyday life, and firm conviction slips away. Some of us have settled into skepticism; others, into the chronic fear of being deceived. Passion and ardor have drained away, with the emptied space silted up with distractions. We have lost our ability to believe in belief.

It hardly seems worth noting that things were not always so. The modern Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gassett suggested the term *creencias* to name those embedded certitudes and core convictions so taken for granted as not to be called into question. *Creencias* are assumptions that seem to need no assent—"what everybody knows"—conclusions settled for us so long ago that they stand merely as the background from which we always begin. Not exactly absolutes, they are simply there, in place, given. For Ortega, *creencias* seem to exist before we begin to think; they are less truths we "have" than truths we "inhabit."

Most anyone can think of examples:

- water runs downhill;
- human beings are different from machines;
- counting and measuring define the physical world;
- certain people, places, and things are beautiful;
- higher forms of life are divided into male and female.

The list could easily be lengthened, revealing how extensive is the repertory of shared, practical understanding with which we work out our everyday questions and problems. Like the common sense found in proverbs, however, these givens exist in some peculiar way that prevents mapping precisely how they overlap, support, or even contradict each other. And this unmappability of our shared understanding has made it vulnerable.

For well over a century, believability has been in decline, as existing society came under attack, especially by the European intellectuals who tirelessly demonstrated how our cultural codes justify exploitation. Traditional religion was painted as superstition for pacifying underlings; polite society, as a screen for unconscious and illicit drives. Bourgeois rectitude was declared a mask for alienation from work, the self, and other people. From the upper intellectual and social classes, doubts about the codes governing civilized life spread gradually down the social ladder. Relationships between men and women, parents and children, no longer seemed transparent but were perceived to conceal dark secrets and self-deceptions. When stories of private life (once thought separate from the public sphere) became the stuff of everyday publishing, innocence became implausible.

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Years of such critiques not only influenced our view of public life, but had important effects upon our trust in the givenness of our shared *creencias*. At the same time that we were taught to view political regimes as ideological—powered by justifications for appropriating authority—critics (especially partisans of Freudian or Marxist theory) were also teaching suspicion of the commonplace world: Neither official nor personal appearances should be trusted, for they conceal a drive for control beneath their seeming beneficence. As we were taught, so we learned; and this dual distrust of the political and the personal has long since become an integral part of the way we regard our everyday circumstances.

The breakup of comprehensive political ideologies—even of the comprehensive Communist doctrines that promised emancipation—accounts for only one of the flights from certainty. Consider the epistemological effect of television, which rains images upon us, cascading pictures claiming to be actualities and copies claiming to be originals. Not only does the jumble of sight and sound overwhelm sensibility, but the disjointed segments defy coherent form. The isolation of the viewer eliminates public interaction, just as the constantly flickering surface eliminates private reflection—and thus drains away from us trust in the *creencias* that require both public and private space. For the marketers who crave the trust of a mass audience, the sponsorship of nonstop distraction and discontinuity ends, ironically, in subverting any possibility of trust.

As electronics brings together television and computers, surrogates become more common, and actualities more neglected. And when materiality fades, the connection words once had with things is loosened. In some academic and entertainment realms the notion has been advanced that all perception is inevitably distorted by sensory bias. As audiences accede—not captive, of course, but unable to answer back—they accept an arbitrarily mediated world. Merging detached symbols, illuminated banalities, facsimiles without anterior substance, transient celebrities, and the laugh track, electronic presentation makes hitherto unimagined demands upon our cognitive abilities—and less and less is as it appears to be.

Even while contemporary science seems determined to reduce mental and emotional states to a material base, the legitimacy of the tangible is being eroded. Among computer programs now available is a sort of over-the-counter remedy for accuracy that permits one to "improve" photographs by taking out a face here or moving a limb there. Little concerned to distinguish the fake from the real, the copy from the thing, we learn to prefer simulations, and the actual—drab by comparison—is relinquished.

Day after day, the news brings catastrophes, incurable diseases, cruelty, avarice, fraud, and malfeasance. The media's tireless depiction of suffering ends by enfeebling the viewers who recognize their inability to correct it all. News analysis is of little help. Research reports disagree on putative causes and possible cures; they tell of ameliorative projects failing or even making things worse. News about such reports is often accompanied by the reactions of advocates who protest, make demands and accusations, claim rights ignored and victimization—followed by official denials, inconsistent versions of events, and contradictory statistics, all so tangled as never to be sorted out between commercials.

Even for inattentive watchers, the unceasing display of misery and of experts endlessly disputing creates a sense of disarray. Feeling not "compassion fatigue" but inadequacy in the face of cognitive overload, they may realize (at some critical mass of incoherence) that things are beyond their control—and the watchers feel abandoned by the civic world. But if they come to see that things are beyond anyone's control, then they are even more lost, and an even larger crisis of confidence can be anticipated. Politicians, referring in recent years to "the politics of meaning," must be aware of voter distrust. But they cannot admit, if they know, how deep go the sources of failed comprehensibility.

One openly acknowledged source of fading substantiality is the coup d'état attempted in epistemology by the postmodernists. Their difficult tracts are largely unread outside academic circles, of course. But their orienting framework has nonetheless achieved remarkable currency among ordinary citizens, and their ideas have migrated into everyday speech.

The postmodernists are only the latest intellectuals to repudiate authority and foundations, but (perhaps more than any earlier thinkers) their style has struck a chord in street-level nihilism. Playful and faddish, strewing their talk with a chic vocabulary, they strike subversive poses even while declaiming theatrical phrases like "end of the subject" or "death of the author" that ought to be—but surprisingly seem not to be—foreign to the common citizen's understanding.

The reason for the visibility of these notions, I think, is that postmodernism names the actual discrepancies now in our public eye and ear: fragmentation, randomness, disconnection, irony, impermanence, ambiguity, and marginality. Beguiling surfaces are what count in a desubstantialized world where presence depends upon our "gaze"—as it does in the cyberspace of endlessly multiplied images.

A few decades ago, the "Death of the Enlightenment" was a phrase current among European intellectuals who saw corrupted everywhere the promise of progress and liberation under the rule of Reason. The Enlightenment, in breaking with archaic and biblical forms of understanding, had asserted that

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things are wholly accessible to scrutiny—and hence could be known, described, and explained in direct, comprehensive, and reliable forms. When narrowed into its instrumental uses, however, rationality (according to this view) fell into the service of a state apparatus and became a means for designing "rationalized" exploitation of man and nature.

To be sure, death was a premature verdict. Some scholars had recognized much earlier that flaws had been built into the foundations of the Enlightenment. Others pointed out that it thrust aside less assertive forms of knowing. Nonetheless, its aplomb, its sense of certainty and uniform intelligibility with mankind as center, long survived.

Recent radical challenges seem to have wounded that optimism. All observations, the postmodernists claim, are relative to the perspective of observers. Since each sighting is a partial fiction—one story told in one linguistic structure—no unified account can be expected. Exterior authority has been deposed, and no source for adjudicating competing versions is available. The task of critical postmodern thinking is the dismantling of narratives to expose their hidden interests and oppressive intentions—whereupon the old assumptions about foundational reality will be abandoned.

The cumulative effect of all this has been to push Enlightenment epistemology into senescence. While contradictions abound in postmodernist analysis, both its tone (smart, unsentimental, leveling, quarrelsome, transgressive, ridiculing) and its paranoia about power seem to speak for widespread popular disbelief—especially of the outpourings of quasi-official messages, excuses, and exhortations. Its attack on the foundations of knowledge has penetrated into areas once not open to question by showing how ambiguous are all those reported, second-hand worlds.

Cultural anthropology, for example, has become beset with doubts whether investigators can actually penetrate and translate findings about preliterate cultures into our first-world languages. Similarly, psychotherapists have come to see the self as a destabilized and contrived presence, with sexual identity a construction that will not withstand close inspection. Our old *creencias* of maleness and femaleness have begun to fall apart, oddly accompanied by creeping distrust of intimate relationships between any of the several sexes—contaminated anyway by fears of infection, with extensive instruction about safe practices given little credence.

Not surprisingly, chronic hesitancy toward truth claims, denial of personal agency, and radical relativizing of standards turn out to be disruptive and even cruel when adopted for everyday living. The acclamation of such notions breeds among vulnerable individuals a debility of moral sense and a draining away of resolution. Erased boundaries and multiple perspectives offered as therapeutic may seem to allow escape from the confines of custom, but they also blur distinctions needed to decide, to choose, and to change. One cannot, after all, stand either everywhere or nowhere.

It nearly goes without saying that another attack on the *creencias* has been made in the name of multiculturalism. The goal of diversity has come to rule our institutions, as multiculturalists routinely hector the citizenry about its indifference and parochial attitudes and various advocacy groups jostle for position, funds, and attention. The effect is to diminish the meaning of any outlook or practice. Assailed with charges and denunciations, the common audience feels not only the intended doubts about itself, but doubts about everything.

This process is easily traced in the arts. Despite years of subsidies by taxpayers, the art industry has scorned dissent from nonprofessionals—assuming their views to be tainted by prejudices and limited information. And as audiences have been treated, so they have become: For a large portion of the population, aesthetic and moral concepts once held as *creencias* have been displaced by a vocabulary of pragmatic utility and the relativity of taste.

The same process has become manifest in politics, where the very arguments by which special interests urge us to listen to them have undermined our ability to listen to anyone. The process also appears in the administrative use of experts whose depersonalized technical vocabulary (originally a way of asserting the significance of their speech) has succeeded only in diminishing the vitality of all language—especially the ordinary speech in which citizens once affirmed the *creencias* of their shared world. And the process shows up as well in the clumsy interventions of government agencies into realms formerly managed by the family: asserting that parents are incapable of proper child care and discipline, and then failing miserably to replace parents, the state at last manages to convince us only that proper child care and discipline is beyond reach.

But perhaps the clearest example of this process whereby the attempt to replace our *creencias* with other epistemic ways has undermined confidence in local ways of knowing occurs in research into the causes of crime and deviance. The claim that criminal behavior is explained by hidden social or psychological forces is difficult for nonprofessionals to challenge. The exculpation heard ever since sociology adopted its mechanical model of explanation has been matched with contemporary biomedical research arguing that the mind is merely an electrochemical apparatus. Belief in choice cannot be maintained, and our status as active moral agents is gradually diminished, with very real political implications. Democracy requires a belief in human agency, intention, and purpose. If we may no longer blame, convict, or reproach, how might we praise?

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From a Fascist prison in the 1930s, Antonio Gramsci wrote at length to try to persuade fellow revolutionaries that culture was a force which could shape consciousness independently of material conditions. His point is one we should take seriously, for we have today evidence that a culture of opposition and distrust can be produced without a base in class structures or integrated political doctrine. The unity of the old political left in America has been successfully broken by a crowd of apparently freestanding causes. As the demands for change accumulate, the sense of permanent and irreconcilable grievance has spread. Unhindered by dialectical critique, "Hostile-Adversarial" becomes a familiar look on television, radio, films, and concerts, breeding a contagion of grudge, resentment, and sullen discontent.

While hostility was cultivated in early radical struggles to create party solidarity, current expressions offer only distraction. Among the young especially, a pervasive individualist bias, a lack of interest in locating underlying sources of common problems, and the physical arrangements of mass spectacles all insure that despite chanting for freedom the disaffected will never confront the contradictions of wealthy investors subsidizing pop nihilism or huge conglomerates managing radical performers.

Theodore Adorno notes the anomaly of unbridled individualism appearing at the same time in which the "individual" is vanishing. This anomaly is felt especially by the people who come to the cities to pursue professional careers. Having freed themselves from settled place and identity, isolated yet wary of binding commitments, they retreat to a sovereign selfhood and a refusal to believe in the interiority of other selves. Detached as individuals, they see themselves not only each as a center, but each as the *only* center. In response to fears of inauthenticity, and in pursuit of promises about personal reinventability, they continuously re-edit their public identity. Hyper-reflexive about the self, their attachment to external reality correspondingly weakens, and the objective world dissolves in subjectivity.

Curiously colliding with both reductionist neuroscience and postmodern nihilism—and brought indoors by television—this decay of objectivity only succeeds in a decay of subjectivity: the stable self dissolves into fragments, discontinuity, and freedom without content. Just as the self of radical individualism gradually derealizes the outside world, so too that self is derealized in turn.

It may be that the classical *creencias* of ordinary people could not have survived the decay of rural life. Knowledge may have been grounded in routines of farming, in the factuality of domesticated animals, in manual skills, in extended families living in long-settled communities in places known closely and well. However limited and incomplete its hierarchies of authority, obligation, and worth may now seem, it was comprehensive for a specific way of life, detailed in its implications for action, conveyed in ordinary language, and secure in its substance.

But with the rise of mass communication, new information collected by specialized methods and trained observers was gained without being learned and shared through practical activity. Until the late nineteenth century, it was commonly thought that the two lines of knowledge were complementary; the breakdown between the sources of knowledge (or at least the common acceptance of the fact of breakdown) is fairly recent. An immediately apprehended lifeworld of meaning based on experience and related to a body of practical knowledge vernacularly expressed is now in opposition to a more widely influential world of very different bodies of knowledge and the modes of acquiring them.

The old *creencias*, long relied upon, lost their monopoly, but their claimed replacements have grown away from general intelligibility. When Isaac Newton plotted planetary orbits from a vantage point in England, his work showed how significant knowledge could be gained even by a single observer. Nature was simply "there," commonly available for inspection and the tallying of regularities. But the idyll of direct reading of nature, of discovery by simple looking and counting, could not last. The stuff of physical reality was eventually perceived to be particles and energies well beyond individual sensibility. While physical data can be validated by physics' internal procedures, science now confounds Newton's world of stable objects in uniform motion, distinctly observed.

Similarly, no vantage allows a comprehensive vision of political economy. In the unbounded reaches of statistical complexity, exact forecast is a discarded hope. The ability to assume causal explanation fades when cause and effect become entangled in endless disagreements about mathematical models, predictive failures, cross-disciplinary integrations, orienting paradigms, and factorial determinants. Huge silos of computerized research findings from dozens of fields provide no steady place on which we might stand.

Since the first half of this century, people have noticed how less dependably authority can be asserted in everyday life. By the 1950s, Hannah Arendt, writing of "an ever-widening and deepening crisis," could put it directly: "Authority has vanished from the modern world." The method of doubt that guided early science reappears today as vagrant distrust of essential being. The relation between the knower and known is destabilized, and there appears a refusal of authoritative criteria for distinguishing between competing construals of how things reliably are. One can notice among the young, for example, a resentment of objectivity as somehow authoritarian, as a burden on freedom, imagination, and reinvention of selves, an impediment to some unnamed transcendence.

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So, too, we find an operative denial that things have a resistant nature. Any entity can, with the application of sufficient force, apparently be changed into something quite else—and the transformation is taken to demonstrate the neutral and equivalent character of all things. Universal plasticity—of commodities, and even of the human body—declares a turning away from the integrity of being and a decline in the believability of qualities.

With believability challenged day by day, ordinary people try to cope by compartmentalizing their beliefs or by making gestures like the yellow ribbons tied around trees after a public tragedy. The huge rallies for short-lived causes, the bumptious street celebrations following team victories, the memorials for dead celebrities show a hunger not only for heroes but for being part of something, being for something, being somebody.

None of this tames the daily torrent of sound and facts into coherence. Dispossessed of our *creencias*, we come to see that we have been left alone to replace the sense that has been withdrawn or abandoned. When convictions flee, people are left (as Ortega y Gassett put it) with a feeling of "shipwreck." In the search for firm ground, some rely on therapists, counselors who are themselves immersed in modernity's contradictions. For young people, orphaned from exemplars of the good, prospects seem worse. Rushing to make new shrines of the natural environment, or computers, or space travel, or ethnicity, or nationalism, we find only ramshackle, one-owner cosmologies offering poor shelter.

It seems obvious to say that cognition—apprehending, knowing, believing, and discerning—is changing against a background of near-chaotic complexity. But such an assertion is difficult to accept for those whose work depends on intelligibility, and we must guard against the claim that we ourselves remain free to see things "as they really are," exempt from the reshaping movements or somehow standing on an Archimedean Point above any deformation.

We cannot deny, however, that great transformations of belief do take place. We all admit that when an age or culture has passed it is difficult to recapture its lost *creencias*. The fact that we are well into such a transformation is the conclusion of thinkers as serious as Jacques Barzun and Alasdair MacIntyre. At some point, of course, disorder provides the impetus for the creation of new forms of order.

Perhaps others have a plan for these new forms. I do not. But we need to think clearly about our responsibilities in our present circumstances. This implies, among much else, refusing the torpid, dumbed-down talk that numbs thought. It means turning away from the cant and humbug of "lifestyle," "role model," "self-esteem," "career path," and "human resources." It means espousing clarity and candor in speech, free of official guff and pretense—a valuing of vernacular plain telling. It means turning off the packaged voices, the river of mediated sight and sound, so as to hear one's own voice.

Thinking clearly also requires us to refuse the cognitive relativism casually passed about these days; not flinching from judging mediocrity and not explaining away human accountability. Thinking clearly could benefit as well from joining with others similarly troubled about our condition, helping to repair community and shared sensibility, and attending to the particularity of creation. It requires finally a resolve to speak for the presence of God in our lives. That could be a beginning. FT

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All That Lives Must Die

J. Bottum

I

"Good Hamlet," begs his mother at the audience's first sight of the black-clothed prince, "cast thy nighted color off,"

> And let thine eye look like a friend on
> Denmark.
> Do not forever with thy lids
> Seek for thy noble father in the dust.
> Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives
> must die,
> Passing through nature to eternity.
> *Hamlet*: Aye, Madam, 'tis common.
> *Gertrude*: If it be,
> Why seems it so particular with thee?

The scene is rich, as scenes in Shakespeare always are, with the play of language. Hamlet agrees that death is common, meaning the opposite of noble, but Gertrude had said that death is common, meaning the opposite of particular. With his downcast eyes the Prince may seem to seek for his father in the dust, but that is where his father in fact does lie—or perhaps does not, for the scene ends (ironically, just as Hamlet has said of his father, "I shall not look upon his like again") with Horatio's announcement of the ghost, and Hamlet's eye will soon "look like a friend" on the dead Denmark up in the air on the battlements rather than down in the dust on the floor.

So too this second scene in *Hamlet* is rich with themes the play will later develop: the newly remarried Queen's embarrassment before the still-grieving Prince; her new husband's uneasy possession of the throne; her kittenish tendency—the impulse of the aging coquette—to please and comfort men; perhaps even her genuine and loving wish to see her son consoled. And yet, though Gertrude has complex reasons to want an end to Hamlet's public mourning, her actual argument is simple: recollecting at last our knowledge that death is "common," remembering at length our certainty that "all that lives must die," we ought to leave off weeping.

Claudius too, and for equally complex reasons, seeks an end to Hamlet's mourning. "You must know, your father lost a father," he continues his wife's argument, "That father lost, lost his." Reflection ought to bring to mind the "common theme" of nature: not just that fathers die, but that fathers *must* die.

> To persevere
> In obstinate condolment is a course
> Of impious stubbornness; 'tis unmanly grief;
> It shows a will most incorrect to heaven,
> A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,
> An understanding simple and unschool'd.
> For what we know must be and is as common
> As any the most vulgar thing to sense.
> Why should we in our peevish opposition
> Take it to heart? Fie! 'Tis a fault to heaven,
> A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,
> To reason most absurd, whose common theme
> Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried,
> From the first corpse till he that died today,
> "This must be so."

Hamlet, of course, is not consoled—as the audience knows he surely ought not to be. Claudius, seeking some expression for the universality of death, lights on the obvious trope, "From the first corpse till he that died today." But the first corpse was Abel, murdered by his brother, and the most recent corpse is Hamlet's father, also murdered by a brother. Claudius—in the manner Freud taught us to watch for in Shakespeare—unconsciously confesses his guilt even as he tries to check the grief of the last mourner for his victim.

Something more, however, than merely guilty

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motives is wrong with the argument Gertrude and Claudius offer Hamlet. The crimes of the King and Queen are not incidentals in an otherwise valid consolation, but signals of the consolation's invalidity. And the fact that Shakespeare puts it in the mouths of the guilty pair shows, I think, his awareness of that invalidity. What consolation, after all, is "This must be so"? Who tries to console a child for her broken doll by telling her that all dolls break, it's what dolls do? Offered as a consolation, death's universality would be comic if it were not so sad. What could a child feel at being assured that not only has her old doll broken, but so will every other doll she owns? Knowledge of universal death ought logically to make grief worse, not better: not only has my father died, but so will my mother, my spouse, my children, my friends, and everyone I ever love.

The world is full of theories about *Hamlet*, each more fantastic than the last. One theory I find helpful, however, claims that the play—in part, at least—presents the revulsion of medieval Christianity at the Renaissance revival of pagan philosophy. Fragments of Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism, the major schools of ancient philosophy, survived throughout the Middle Ages and had been reconciled to some degree with Christian theology. But the Renaissance rediscovered the minor, unassimilated schools of ancient pagan thought: Cynicism, Epicureanism, Skepticism, and, especially, Stoicism. Indeed, from Shakespeare's time through the nineteenth century, "philosophical" meant in English primarily what in the twentieth century we would call "stoical."

The woolly arguments of Gertrude and Claudius are thus not new, but merely bad examples of a general revival that marks Renaissance thought. In Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, in Renaissance translations of Seneca and Boethius, in the Renaissance forgery that claimed to be Cicero's long-lost treatise on consolation, in Petrarch, and in Montaigne, there are better examples of the Renaissance rediscovery of ancient modes of consolation, and less troublesome instances of the Renaissance restoration of the ancient pagan scorn for grief. In our preference for the grief of Hamlet above the consolation of Gertrude and Claudius, however, Shakespeare shows us the problem created by this Renaissance revival.

We are unfair to both drama and philosophy when we suppose that Shakespeare wrote philosophy. And even where playwrights are philosophers (as the Roman Stoic philosopher Seneca was), their plays have heroes more heroic than Hamlet and villains more villainous than Claudius. But Shakespeare shows (as Christopher Marlowe showed before him) that tragic clashes do not require paragons. Hamlet is no saintly Christian: "Now could I drink hot blood," he swears. And Claudius is no noble Roman Stoic: a murderer, carouser, plotter, and seducer of his brother's wife, he could never have been "philosophical" in the stoical sense of the word—never have hidden his fright when the play within the play manages "to catch the conscience of the King," never have proved in suicide "more an antique Roman than a Dane."

But the clash between Hamlet and Claudius may nonetheless be in part a clash between Christianity and Stoicism, for Hamlet's mind moves in a way that St. Augustine would recognize and Claudius' mind in a way that Seneca would know. It takes a Christian (albeit a bad one) to hesitate to kill a kneeling man—as Hamlet at least claims to hesitate to kill Claudius—for fear that, slain at prayer, the victim escape hellfire. It takes a Stoic (albeit a bad one) to urge his victim's son to contemplate the naturalness of death. The irony of Claudius' argument for consolation deserves our notice: Who better to trust than a murderer, after all, for the news that all men die?

No theory of *Hamlet* completely explains the notoriously difficult play, of course. And yet, some awareness of a clash between Christianity and Stoicism in the play gives us an insight into the oddity of being consoled by death's universality: To take solace for the death of one human being in the fact that all human beings die is on its face absurd or even spiteful. But the logical invalidity of a consolation does not prevent it from being psychologically consoling, and there is, as the Stoics saw, a way in which universal death may actually console us for a particular death. Hamlet's problem, and ours, is that this Stoical way of consoling grief ends in a denial of the reality of the dead person for whom the mourner grieves—a denial Gertrude and Claudius undoubtedly desire.

II

The thought that death is common, that all that lives must die, offers no obvious consolation. Be consoled, it seems to say, not only have you lost the one you mourn, but you will eventually lose everyone else you love. And yet, bad argument or not, a denial of the uniqueness of the dead person does seem to have some genuinely consoling effect in abstracting us from the particularity of our grief. The horror of loss originates in the helpless knowledge of the present absence of the person we once loved—and still would love, still *do* love, though the object of that love is now forever lost. But could we abstract from time, could we rise above the stream of time and see the future with the past, present loss would be beneath us. The Now in which we are powerless would not be the Now in which we powerfully subpoena past and future in contemplation of undying universals. To be able to rise above the self, to think of universal death, denies the helplessness of grief. Its power to console lies not so much in its *thought* as in its *thinking*.

The knowledge of universal death often involves a second abstraction as well, in the knowledge that

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everyone at some time must suffer grief. "There is a form of consolation, extremely commonplace I grant you, which we ought always to have on our lips and in our hearts," writes Cicero,

> to remember that we are human beings, born under a law which renders our life a target for all the slings and arrows of fortune, and it is not for us to refuse to live under the conditions of our birth, nor to resent so impatiently the misfortunes we can by no process of forethought avoid, but, by recalling to mind what has befallen others, to induce the reflection that what has happened to ourselves is nothing new.

As a *thought*, it must be acknowledged, this is mean and spiteful: it is vile to be consoled for suffering by the thought that everyone else must sometime suffer too. But as a *thinking*, this is in fact the most abstracting of consolations. To think it, we must perform a sort of double abstraction: first losing our own particular humanity in the abstraction to universal humanity, and then losing our own particular loss in the universality of that universal humanity's universal experience of loss. Few of us can think many thoughts at once, and the complexity of this abstraction may be one reason for its apparent consolation: the thinking of it takes so much thought, we must put aside some grief. But even could we hold in mind every horror of our grief, still we are offered an escape from grief by this ancient Stoic thought that all the world must suffer—for the self who contemplates universal suffering is not the self who suffers.

The ancients were not children and did not imagine that they would live forever or that they must not mention death. "Always think on death," Seneca writes to a dying man, "that you may never fear it." But already in Rome's Silver Age, traditional words of consolation for grief had come to seem tired, old, and used. Seneca himself writes of his need for new expressions. Pliny begs for arguments "uncommon and resistless." A century later, Fronto (a famous orator and the teacher of the Stoic Emperor, Marcus Aurelius) observes the unlikeliness that "poets' songs or philosophers' precepts" will much console anyone for the loss of a child.

Complaints about a tradition, however, testify to its existence. It was Hellenistic Greek writers who developed and bequeathed to Rome the *Consolatio*—a formal essay of consolation, full of standard metaphors and arguments, and repeated turns of phrase. This ancient genre, in its Renaissance translation and imitation, is the ultimate source of the second-hand and second-rate arguments for consolation Claudius and Gertrude offer Hamlet. But the ancient *Consolatio*, even in its most polished Latin form (in Seneca's hands, most famously), does not escape the immorality that Hamlet, I believe, senses in the arguments of his mother and stepfather.

Long before the Hellenistic Age, philosophers had written on consolation for fear at the death of the self, and mourners written on their sorrow at the death of others. Plato mentions consolation in both the third and tenth books of the *Republic*, and consolation is a constant theme in the trio of dialogues about Socrates' death. Though we have lost a celebrated essay on death by Democritus and a dialogue by Aristotle, the surviving pseudo-Platonic *Axiochus* reveals the common Greek philosophical concern for consoling the fear of death. We have as well, from the earliest times, elegiac poetry, funeral orations, and gravestone inscriptions. But the *Consolatio* as a genre is born only when Hellenistic writers adapted these philosophical analyses and funeral phrases to arguments against grief.

By all accounts, Cicero was the first Roman to perform this adaptation, and in their early days, formal Latin *consolationes* could be distinguished from informal notes of sympathy and from poetry. But, so powerful does Cicero's tradition become, little difference remained in later writers between the consolations offered in prose—formal or informal—and consolations in poetic *epicedia*: there are "definite words," writes Cicero, appropriate to grief. Cicero is not an inconsiderable philosopher, but he begins a tradition of Latin consolation with serious philosophical problems.

Several arguments typify the *Consolatio*, and mark it as a genre. Some of these—"It is utter folly," Cicero observes, "to be uselessly overcome by sorrow when one realizes that there is no possible advantage"; we are bound, he adds, by "the dictates of consistency" to cease mourning—simply beg the question. Why ought we to do what is useful? Why ought we to be consistent with our past behavior? Only if we had already accepted usefulness and consistency (which is to say, already accepted an active rationality defined in opposition to the passion of our grief) would we find consolation in an appeal to usefulness and consistency. The other typical arguments fare no better. Cicero writes that we must "anticipate by our wisdom what the passage of time is sure to bring us," while his friend Servius Sulpicius argues that the dead themselves would stop our mourning if they could. Both these consolations are logically incomplete—what could personified Wisdom or the ghostly dead tell us except some other consolation?—and both betray a temporal confusion by importing future and past into the present.

This temporal confusion is the overwhelming device of the *Consolatio*, and, once having noticed it, we find it everywhere. All the typical consolations of the *Consolatio* assert the consoling power of the abstraction involved in knowing that everyone must die. To speak of usefulness is to bring the future within touch of the present. To speak of consistency is to bring the present within touch of the past. Knowledge of coming forgetfulness uses the future to

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testify against present grief, and knowledge of the dead uses the testimony of the past.

There is something absurd about a proof that all we love must someday cease to be. We know it by a sure induction. Things do not remain as we left them: our mothers and our fathers die, our friends, the places that we knew, the objects we regard. But this fact that all things die does not itself die. Nothing in the perpetual flux of Heraclitus is comprehensible, any more than we can step into the same flowing river twice. But our knowledge of the impermanence of things is itself a sort of permanence. We comprehend a deathless unity when we observe the dying multiplicity.

Explanations of this ceaseless flux range from Aristotle's definition of time as the measure of motion to Isaac Newton's equitable and absolute temporal flow. But all such explanations offer an escape from corruptible particulars to bright, unchanging universals. And though Aristotle himself notes time's terrible destruction, and though Newtonian physics is itself a science of change, still we stand outside destruction when we see it; the perceiver of time is not in the time that he perceives. When we contemplate the stream of time, we transcend death in thought: thinking of our span of days, and supposing thus beyond them.

It seemed to the Stoics that this fact might be used for consolation not just of our fear at our own coming death, but of our grief at other people's death, as well. Only if nothing were to die could we banish grief. But since things do die, the only way to say they do not is to emphasize the fact they do. This is less paradoxical than it sounds. To be consoled for grief by the thought that death is common is either absurd or spiteful. And yet, there is a consolation in the universal, for the ability to think of death implies the thinker stands above that death. In that horrifying letter in which he urges a dying man to think about death, Seneca means to be consoling: the more we emphasize death and destruction, the more we will rise above them; the more we think on death and destruction, the less real they will become. When the Stoic says that all men die, he means that they do not.

III

The gain of this Stoic *memento mori*, however—at least as it seeks to console grief at the death of others rather than to console fear at the death of ourselves—is purchased at a cost: not only does death become less real, but so do the particular things that die. In his struggle to keep alive the memory of his father that everyone else at Denmark's court seems so willing to let go, Hamlet sees what all who have ever grieved must see: Knowledge of universal death cannot console us for the fact that a real, unique, and particular person has been ripped from being, that a hole exists in the fabric of the universe, that all the real possibilities which once depended upon that dead person are now no longer possible.

There is, of course, a remedy for grief in "the long lapse of time," as Cicero writes, "slow-working, it is true, but effectual." And yet, he adds, "it is not the mere lapse of time that produces this effect, but continued reflection. For if the circumstances are the same, and the person is the same, how can there be any change in the grief felt?" Our experience certainly is that grief weakens in time; indeed, in *Mourning and Melancholia* Freud describes grief as a form of insanity that we do not bother to treat as insane because we are confident that it will pass. But this, as Cicero sees, is exactly the problem. The passage of time, taken by itself, cannot be what dilutes our grief, for the cause of that grief remains untouched by time: the real person whom we really loved is just as dead and gone. Grief must be drowned, rather, by some event that happens in that passage of time.

For Cicero, this event is a slow but inevitable reemergence of rationality. "There is no grief that is not diminished and mitigated by the lapse of years," Sulpicius reminds him when Cicero himself seemed to over-mourn his daughter's early death; "To await that lapse, instead of hastening to forestall the effect by applying your wisdom, is not creditable to you." For Freud, too, time brings about a rationalization in which we accept the world of possibilities as actually constituted—in which we no longer seek the impossible object but become sane once again.

And yet, what right has grief to grow so thin? "Let love clasp grief lest both be drowned," as Tennyson demands in *In Memoriam*,

> Let darkness keep her raven gloss.
> Oh, better to be drunk with loss,
> To dance with death, to beat the ground
>
> Than that the victor hours should scorn
> The long result of love. . . .

Beyond the bare claim that grief ought to end, neither the philosopher nor the psychologist can give a reason for grief to end. We do a disservice to the dead when we accept and rationalize in abstraction the fact of death. We forget the life that was, we kill the corpse a second time, when we abandon grief's struggle to maintain the always present absence of the beloved dead person whom we mourn.

The Stoics, in other words, are factually right: in abstraction to the knowledge of universal death, we can hasten the loss of grief's sharp edge that time will eventually bring about anyway. But that does not make it morally right that we forget, and still less does it make right that we hasten the day of forgetting.

It is true that, insensibly, we do in fact let the dead slip away. "Surprised by joy—impatient as the Wind," Wordsworth writes after his daughter's death,

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> I turned to share the transport—Oh! with whom
> But thee, deep buried in the silent tomb . . . ?
> But how could I forget thee? through what power,
> Even for the least division of an hour,
> Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
> To my most grievous loss!

And it is true that the world does in fact go on in spite of grief. But neither of these facts makes it right that we forget or ever cease to grieve.

The first guilt felt in grief is that the guilty lover dares to live, even in grief; the second guilt is that the lover dares to live even after grief has ceased. Gradually, in care for other things, in the wants and the needs of the body, perhaps even in the burden of charity, the bustle draws us back and we cease at length to grieve. And one bright day, we notice that we have ceased to grieve, and all the world goes black in guilty grief again. But the inwardness of grief decays and we find it harder and harder to summon up the ghostly present absence of the dead. Like Wordsworth, C. S. Lewis, in his painstaking self-scrutiny after the death of his wife, observes the strange sharp guilt that accompanies the first awareness of having been for a moment not grieving—the guilt that accompanies the knowledge that grief is dying.

This guilt has always seemed to me to reflect a genuine moral impulse. The idea that death is common may remind us that we lack the strength and time to grieve for all the dead. "I had not thought death had undone so many," T. S. Eliot remembers from Dante (remembering from Virgil, remembering from Homer). But that we must fail to grieve for all gives no sanction to our failure; virtue is not heroic save when it aims at what lies beyond our power. And, more important, that we must fail to grieve for all gives no reason to cease to grieve for some. I do not know all the dead, but those dead whom I know depend in some important way upon my grief:

> On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
> Some pious drops the closing eye requires,
> Even from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
> Even in our ashes live their wonted fires

as Thomas Gray claims in his *Elegy in a Country Churchyard.*

The fact remains, as Cicero and Freud both saw, that—despite the guilt we feel as it fades—grief does seem to fade. But its fading ought to be a cause for deep suspicion to a moral imagination. "The only thing grief has taught me is to know how shallow it is," Emerson writes after the death of his son.

> Something which I fancied was a part of me, which could not be torn away without tearing me, nor enlarged without enriching me, falls off from me, and leaves no scar. . . . I grieve that grief can teach me nothing, nor carry me one step into real nature. . . . I take this evanescence and lubricity of all objects which lets them slip through our fingers then when we clutch hardest, to be the most unhandsome part of our condition.

The desire of Gertrude and Claudius to hasten Hamlet's forgetting proceeds, I believe, from a hope to implicate the Prince psychologically in their crime—a complicated ploy in which they hope that Hamlet will equate his griever's guilt with their agent's guilt and thereby find a psychologically compelling motive to hurry his forgetting. And Hamlet is saved from this ploy only by his suspicion of himself confronting the conflicting moral demands assailing him.

Unless the dead will stand again before us as themselves—unless death is in fact unreal—there is no consolation. "The immortality of souls brings us not the slightest consolation," Fronto observes in a letter to Marcus Aurelius,

> seeing that in this life we are bereft of our best-beloved ones. We miss the well-known gait, the voice, the features, the free air; we mourn over the pitiable face of the dead, the lips sealed, the eyes turned, the hue of life all fled. Be the immortality of the soul ever so established, that will be a theme for the disputations of philosophers, it will never assuage the yearning of a parent.

According to some interpretations of *Hamlet,* the Prince's obstinate grief may have conjured or projected the ghost upon the Danish battlements, for he can find even a troubled consolation only in actual sight of his father. So too, perhaps, when Jesus wept for Lazarus, the consolation he chose was to call the corpse forth from the grave. A clear reading of *Hamlet,* a clear reading of ourselves, requires that we not lie to ourselves about this, any more than Hamlet does—though his honesty drives him nearly mad. Short of the immediate opening of the graves—short of resurrection *now*—there is no consolation: only the vilest of abstractions and the most self-serving of forgettings. FT

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Where Are You, Adam?

Marc Gellman

An angel came to me and told me that all the great questions are short. There are more guarded ways of saying this, but that is the way it happened. I asked the angel, "What do you mean, all the great questions are short?" and the angel said, "Look in the Torah." That was it.

Now every year, in anticipation of the High Holy Days, I read the Torah again anyway to see which of the words I have read a thousand times still speak to me with an urgency worthy of the season, but this year I returned to collect the questions in the Torah. On doing so, I realized how few questions there really are. There is, after all, not much dialogue in the Torah, and questions come only from dialogue. As I searched these relatively few questions, I came to the further realization that the best questions in the Torah are the shortest ones. In fact, the shortest questions are, I believe, the greatest not just in that text but in life.

The shortest question in the Torah is, remarkably, God's first question in the Torah. It is a question asked in Genesis 3:9. Adam and Eve had just eaten some fruit from the forbidden tree and, sensing God's presence in the Garden of Eden, they hid among the trees. While they were hiding, God asked Adam a one-word question. In Hebrew that word is *ayeka?* In English it means, "Where are you?" It is a really great, really short question, but in order to apprehend its greatness we must first get beyond the initial and justified reaction that this is a stupid question. How, we have every right to ask, is it that the omniscient Lord of the universe, the One who spoke and the world came into being, the One who set the stars in their places and the sun in its course, the One who said to the ocean, this shall be your boundary, the God of all vision—how could it be that such a God had to ask Adam where he was?

Our sages, the rabbis, taught in their midrashim that God asked this question of Adam so that he would have an opportunity to confess his sin and repent before God spoke again and pronounced punishment. It is like the way your parents called you by your middle name when they were angry with you. Indeed the only reason for middle names is to give your parents a way of letting you know that your life as you have known and lived it up to that moment is over because of something you broke, or said, or did, or hit. When you heard your parents call you by your middle name it was a sign to every smart child to confess everything immediately.

For another, deeper, reason for God's question to Adam, we must go to a story told by Martin Buber. Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the Hasidic Rav of Northern White Russia, was put in jail because the opponents of the Hasidim had betrayed him to the Tsarist police. The great Rav was asked by an inquisitive and biblically literate jailer, "How are we to understand that God, the all-knowing, said to Adam: 'Where are you?'" The Rav answered the jailer, "Do you believe that the Scriptures are eternal and that every era, every generation, and every man is included in them?" "I believe this," answered the jailer. "Well then," said Rav Shneur Zalman, "in every era, God asks every person, 'Where are you in your world? So many years and days of those allotted to you have passed, and how far have you gotten in your world?' God says something like this, 'You have lived forty-six years. How far along are you?'" When the chief jailer heard his exact age mentioned by the Rav he stood up shaken, placed his hand on the Rav's shoulder, and cried.

Rav Shneur Zalman understood what we must now understand. God did not need to ask Adam where he

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was, it was Adam who needed to be asked; and God does not need to ask each one of us *ayeka,* it is we who need to be asked. The High Holy Days are the season of *ayeka,* the time when we are asked by God together and alone to admit for good and ill where we are, to render a spiritual accounting not of our careers but our compassion, not of our wealth but our wisdom, not of our gains but our gifts, not of our physical fitness but of the fitness of our souls.

A ship cannot make its way through the seas without a compass, and we cannot make our way through life without being asked at the turn of each and every year, *ayeka,* "Where are you?" That question, and our answer, create the moral agenda for our work in the year ahead. That question and our answer are meant to puncture the hidings, evasions, and self-deceptions that blind us both to the ways we have made progress and also to the ways we have fallen short. The main danger in this yearly questioning is our desire, like Adam and Eve our ancestors, to hide rather than answer, to flee rather than face, to evade rather than accept responsibility for what we have done and for what we have left undone. Our lesson to be learned is the same lesson learned by Adam and Eve: *hiding does not work.*

Adam answers *ayeka* in a truly pitiful way: "I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and so I hid myself." Adam's answer is just another evasion. He does not admit to eating the forbidden fruit, only to being afraid of appearing before God naked (something that had never troubled him before). After Adam's cowardly answer, God gives him yet another chance to confess and repent. God asks Adam, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree whereof I commanded you that you should not eat?" Surely we could expect Adam to confess now—the jig is up, God knows—but Adam still does not accept responsibility for his sin. He answers God, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat." This answer is even worse. Confronted with direct evidence of his sin, Adam indirectly blames God for giving him the woman, and directly blames Eve for giving him the forbidden fruit to eat. Adam seems incapable of accepting responsibility for his actions. He insists on portraying himself as a victim of choices made by others rather than as a guilty party who has made bad choices for himself as the result of his own free will. The question to Adam was, "Where are you?" All he could offer as his insipid answer was, "Where was everybody else?"

Unfortunately, Adam would have fit right into our world. Ours is an age filled with Adams. We are becoming a nation of victims. Each of us is armed to the teeth with reasons why what we did was simply not our fault. We are codependent. We are recovering phobics. We are disadvantaged psychologically, damaged societally, abused addictively. What we will all admit to is that actions ought to have consequences. What we will all not admit to is that *our* actions ought to have consequences. We have created a culture where it is unbelievably easy to evade responsibility for anything we do. It is not that there are no real victims in this society, it is that there are so many perpetrators claiming to be victims that the real victims are lost in the stampede of moral evasion that is trampling our civic and personal virtue into dust.

At the heart of Adam's self-deception as well as our national addiction to the cult of victimhood is the simple inability to feel shame. Shame is not embarrassment or humiliation or neurotic guilt—those debilitating emotions that do not generally lead to constructive change in our lives. Shame is the healthy response to sin that leads to repentance, reconciliation, and change. Shame is the basic moral feeling that we have done something very wrong and ought to do something to make things right. Shame is the engine of the moral life because it leads us to reconstruct our moral life after we have torn it down. Shame leads us back to God after we have strayed from God and God's law. To have the courage of our shame is hard, very hard, but it is the only way to build character and virtue. It is the only way to live a decent life, a religious life, a Jewish life. You can light all the candles and bless all the wine and challah you want, but if you cannot feel shame you cannot be a good Jew.

It is depressing that our nation of victims is also a shameless nation. Consider: Mike Tyson gets out of jail for rape and receives a hero's welcome in Harlem. Daryl Strawberry is convicted of tax evasion and drug abuse and is rewarded by a contract with the Yankees. Richie Parker, a high school basketball star, is convicted of rape but still offered a full basketball scholarship from Seton Hall University. Hugh Grant hires a hooker and his career takes off. Geraldo and Geraldo-wannabes compete with each other to recruit for their talk shows ever more shameless exhibitionists who will reveal things nobody has a right to know, and nobody ought to have the shamelessness to reveal. And the man who began our national slide into shamelessness, Richard Nixon, and who died never once expressing clear unmitigated shame about his actions in the Watergate scandal, was buried a hero by a bunch of other shameless politicians. From top to bottom, black to white, Wall Street to the Bowery, we have become a shameless nation. We sin but we do not cower, we transgress but we do not cringe, we trespass but we do not quail.

And do not believe that Geraldo and the mass media is the only cause of shamelessness in our culture. In elite colleges and universities across the country there is a systematic and conscious attempt to convince our kids that all moral judgments are culturally relative, which means that nothing is

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morally certain, which means that there is no reason to feel shame about anything. In my eight years at Northwestern University and in my continued academic activities, I have seen a hundred courses built on the intellectual foundations of deconstructionism and its presupposition that all codes of human conduct are relative and merely reflect transient cultural assumptions and economic arrangements that do not possess any real authority. I knew and I know a hundred professors who actually believe that there is no such thing as absolute right and absolute wrong. And we send our children to learn from these people, and we pay them lots of money to undermine and savage the values we have tried to teach at home.

Academia, of course, is not a complete moral desert. There are still old-fashioned professors trying to teach the moral virtues with the sharp cutting edge they once possessed. But academia is in the midst of a terrible drought and it needs a good soaking rain of common sense, moral virtue, and shame. For to feel shame we must be able to assert in the face of this tide of cultural nihilism that there is right and wrong, and that we should be ashamed of ourselves if we do not do what we know is right and do not try to correct what is wrong. To feel shame we must be able to defend the proposition that our behavior is not wholly determined by environment. To feel shame we must understand that imposing moral norms is not an arrogant and unwarrantable assumption of infallibility, but, on the contrary, is a necessary condition of human happiness, and even of human survival. To feel shame we must hear God's great short question to Adam, *ayeka*, as a question addressed to us.

In *The Altruistic Personality*, their book about Christians who saved Jews during the Holocaust, Samuel and Pearl Oliner asked what distinguished the rescuers from the majority who did nothing, or were complicit. Their conclusion was that they were not distinguished by educational level or by political views or even by attitudes towards Jews. They were, however, different in two critical respects: they were strongly connected to communities that had straightforward and unsophisticated understandings of right and wrong, and they had a powerful sense of moral agency and shame. They said over and over again in interviews that they could not have lived with themselves—and many said they could not have answered before God—if they had not done what they had done. The righteous gentiles of the Holocaust came from communities and families that had prepared the way for their courage by teaching them how to feel shame and therefore virtue and courage. In this country those same institutions are often preparing the way for moral relativism and cowardice by teaching that nobody really knows what is right and what is wrong, so what the hell.

The deep truth of the moral life is that alone we are lost. Perhaps that is why Adam could not answer God's great short question, *ayeka*. He had no community to set him right. He had no one except his wife before whom he could feel shame and she was as implicated in the sin as he. Adam had no moral community to give him the courage to confess, and the impulse and locus to reconstruct the world he had wounded by his sin. Because it was just Adam and Eve, a snake, and a few monkeys in the garden, it was inevitable that they would lose Paradise, because in truth the garden was not Paradise, it was just like a very pretty and very private back yard. Since Eden every compelling description of Paradise has had lots of other people sharing it. Being together like this helps each of us to hear and to answer *ayeka*.

If you cannot give a good answer to the *ayeka* God is asking you now, don't despair. Remember that God gives Adam several chances to give the right answer. Only tzadikim, saints, give the right answer right away. God does not expect us to know where we are instantly and unerringly. The important thing in answering *ayeka* is that we must each of us try to be really honest in giving our answer to God. If you find that you have given less than 10 percent of your income to charity and yet claim to be a charitable person, that you spend much more time watching television than reading books and yet claim to be learned, that you give time to clients you would never think of giving to your family and yet claim to be a good family man or woman, and if this is the first time you have been in shul since last *yontif* but you claim to be a very religious person, then you might want to try a little bigger dose of honesty before trying to answer *ayeka*. But do not be afraid to be honest in your answering God's question. God knows your heart and your limits, your dreams and your nightmares, your real successes and your horrible failures.

My job is not to be your judge but your teacher, not your detractor but your advocate. I am just an umpire in the most important game you will ever play. Only God can judge you for eating forbidden fruit in your life, but only you can admit it. My advice as your teacher, rabbi, and umpire is to repent like you were the world's worst sinner, and hope that you will be judged as one of the world's great saints. Just as the time of day and night is perfectly equal at the time of the autumnal equinox, so may we view all our deeds up to this moment as balanced between good and evil, and hope our answer to *ayeka* will tip the balance in our favor among the accountants in charge of the book of life.

In this struggle for honesty and courage, for shame and repentance, you should remember that every single biblical hero from Adam to Moses was flawed. Abraham lied about Sarah being his wife, Jacob stole the birthright from his brother Esau, Moses rebelled against God at the waters of Meribah. For each of

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them shame was not an obstacle but an engine for their greatness. Answering *ayeka* brought them humility and courage, not humiliation and disgrace. In their fallibility we are taught that God will not judge us against some unattainable standard of saintliness. God does not consider us to have failed in our work as human beings if we are not utterly righteous. The tzadikim, the very few of us who are incapable of sin or shame, are more like miracles than role models. The moral possibility they have actualized is so remote from the lives most of us lead that it is not held up as an attainable goal. Indeed, as if to encourage us, the rabbis teach that in one respect a tzadik is actually lower than all of us *beinonim* who do sin. Because the tzadik cannot sin, the tzadik cannot do *teshuvah* (repentance), but we can.

If we just remember how Zusia answered God's question we will be alright. The great Hasidic Rav Zusia was dying and all his students were gathered around him, praying and crying. Then Zusia began to cry and one of his students said, "Rav Zusia, why are you crying? You have lived a righteous life, you have raised up students, and you will be received into the world to come." Rav Zusia answered his students, "I am crying because now I understand that God will not ask me, 'Why were you not Abraham, or why were you not Moses?' God will ask me, 'Why were you not Zusia?' And I will not know what to say."

So let us forget about being Moses or Abraham or Isaac or Jacob or Sarah or Rebekah or Rachel or Leah. Let us try to exalt and refine, atone and improve, not pretend to some remote and unattainable example of perfection. Let us just stand here together, and consider where we were last year, where we are this year, and where we could be next year. That is all we need to ask and that is all we need to answer and that is all we need to understand—except of course that all the great questions are short. FT

"Dread Is the Language by Which We Disguise Our Deeds"

by which we pacify with euphemism
our planned transgressions,
boundaries shifting convenience
into correct countries

is the language by which we pun on pleasure,
pour into our mouths the here-and-now,
an alphabet of aftertaste sour on our tongues

is the two dead children alive
again for the ten seconds it takes to read
in newsprint the absence of their breath

a mistake of transposition,
a column of patient charts
switched like typos

dread is the language
by which the Downs Syndrome girl,
unnamed but not unwritten,
is not the one aborted
first

disguise is the deed that makes the dead
the correction, that stacks together
the specious: the mis-filed, the not-
chosen, the accidentally-left-
for, inconveniently worded, dead.

Marjorie Maddox

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Report

African Slavery 1996

Joseph R. Gregory

"A slave is a person perverted into a thing," wrote Coleridge as the movement to stop the African slave trade was gaining momentum early in the nineteenth century. "Slavery, therefore, is not so properly a deviation from justice as an absolute subversion of all morality."

Slavery had been abolished within the British Isles before the end of the American Revolution, but sugar planters, brokers, and others still benefited from the international trade in human beings and formed a powerful lobby against abolition. To express their outrage, people like Coleridge and Wordsworth used honey rather than sugar to sweeten their tea.

It may have seemed a silly gesture, but it had popular appeal and cumulative impact. Gradually, the Western world brought an end to slavery—in Europe by moral suasion, in America by fire and sword. In the 1980s, artists and athletes opposed apartheid with a cultural boycott against South Africa, and it is not hard to imagine Wordsworth and Coleridge smiling down approvingly from their celestial teacups as Bob Dylan and Jackson Browne sang, "I ain't gonna play Sun City," South Africa's showpiece entertainment complex. Such gestures too had effect, and apartheid fell to the political realities of the communications revolution and the Cold War's end.

But slavery lives on, in all its ancient horror, though politicians, artists, and the media have little to say about it. In the West African nation of Mauritania, between eighty and ninety thousand human beings are owned outright by other people, according to the American Anti-Slavery Group, Human Rights Watch/Africa, and the U.S. State Department. Most are black tribesmen owned by the dark-skinned Berbers known as the Moors. Across the continent, in the war-ravaged Sudan, chattel slaves number in the tens of thousands, according to Christian Solidarity International. Most are the children of black Christian and animist villagers, taken in raids by their traditional Arab enemies, now formed into militia by the Muslim government in Khartoum in its war to subdue the south.

"Nothing has changed in the way of life of these Arab groups for the past hundred years," said a report written in 1995 by the Comboni Fathers, Catholic missionaries in the Sudan. "Their only progress has consisted in the provision of large amounts of modern weapons and up-to-date transportation. The time of long lines of enchained slaves marching north is over. Now truckloads of children are seen moving in the same traditional direction."

These modern slaves often serve as maids or cooks, or as farm laborers or cattle herders. Many were taken too young to remember their homes or families. Some who have tried to escape have been branded, or have had their Achilles tendons cut; some have been castrated. Many, both male and female, are regularly raped.

These facts are well known to Western governments and to the United Nations, and reports on slavery appear in the Western media from time to time. Yet they have failed to ignite the popular indignation that fired the abolitionist and anti-apartheid movements.

"There are two key elements to the story of slavery in the twentieth century," says Charles Jacobs, Research Director of the American Anti-Slavery Group. "One is that it exists at all. The other is what I call the scandal of silence—the fact that people don't want to even acknowledge that it exists."

Cultural relativity is at least partly behind this reticence. The quarrels in Mauritania and the Sudan are obscure. They do not occur against the backdrop of economic modernization, as in South Africa, nor do they mirror the black-white tensions of the apartheid battle, which struck Americans so close to home. Television may have turned the world into a global village, but all politics remains local politics, and in New York and Washington the problem of slavery in Mauritania and the Sudan has become entangled in a domestic dust-up involving black Christians and Muslims and Jews. What politician, artist, or political activist wants to get involved in that?

"Practically every member of the anti-apartheid coalition is AWOL in this battle," Mr. Jacobs said during a recent interview in his home in Newton, Mass., which serves as the headquarters of the American Anti-Slavery Group. Mr. Jacobs, an international management consultant, has joined forces with Mohammed Athie, a former Mauritanian diplomat who is now a political refugee and the group's Executive Director. "We wanted to put together a new coalition," Mr. Jacobs said. "We wanted to reignite the anti-apartheid struggle and we failed."

He said that when the group first contacted white liberal leaders with evidence of a modern slave trade, they invariably deferred to the black civil rights establishment. This seemed sensible enough. "After

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all," said Mr. Jacobs, "who but the descendants of slaves would be the logical choice to lead this fight?" But when the group approached the Rev. Jesse Jackson, the NAACP, and the Congressional Black Caucus, Mr. Jacobs and Mr. Athie found themselves handicapped by a popular conceit—the notion that all black people everywhere should speak with one voice. Black unity, a useful weapon during the civil rights battles of the 1960s and 1970s, suddenly became an obstacle. The Rev. Jackson did not want to get involved in an issue that seemed anti-Arab, Mr. Jacobs said he was told through a spokesman. Initially, the response of other members of the mainstream black leadership was also tepid. They were loathe to get into a fracas with the Nation of Islam, which has dismissed the allegations of slavery as propaganda, an attempt by Jews in the United States to discredit Arabs and Islam. In short, said Mr. Jacobs, "no bad white guys, no news."

But two black newspapers in New York City did take up the call. Samuel Cotton of the *City Sun* and William Pleasant of the *Daily Challenge* each wrote a series on the slave trade that criticized the Nation of Islam for organizing tours to Khartoum for black journalists subsidized by the Sudanese government. After an anti-slavery conference in New York City last May, the NAACP adopted a resolution condemning slavery in the Sudan and Mauritania, and Representative Donald Payne of New Jersey, chairman of the Black Caucus, issued a statement of support for the abolitionists.

But the Nation of Islam charged that the American Anti-Slavery Group is a front for Zionist propaganda. Abdul Akbar Muhammad, the Nation of Islam's spokesman for international affairs, denied that the Sudanese government is engaged in the slave trade and questioned the group's motives in publicizing human rights abuses in Mauritania. "It is well known that the blacks in Mauritania suffer under much racism and mistreatment by the rulers of this North African country," he wrote. But Mr. Jacobs "is using this suffering to judge a religion and not the people of the religion. It is also an attempt to curtail and divide an already divided black community on the issue of Islam and the influence of the Nation of Islam under Minister Louis Farrakhan."

Mr. Athie, a Muslim, says the religious issue is being used as just another tool by the Mauritanian government to cement its control.

Indeed, Mauritania has been as forceful in condemning slavery as any civil rights activist might wish. At least three times in this century slavery has been outlawed there, first by the French, who banned it in 1905, then under the new Constitution drawn up after independence in 1960, and a third time in 1980, under the government of President Mohammed Khouna Ould Haidallah. Today, the country of two million people is said to contain the world's largest population of chattel slaves. Depending upon age and physical condition, they are reportedly sold for as little as $15, given as gifts, or traded for cars, camels, or other goods.

The UN Convention on Slavery defines a slave as anyone who is unable to withdraw his labor voluntarily. This broad definition includes economic slaves—child workers, serfs, and indentured laborers—and exists in various forms throughout much of Asia, the Middle East, and elsewhere.

Human rights organizations estimate that some three hundred thousand people live in this condition in Mauritania. Technically, they are not chattel slaves, but economically and psychologically they belong to other people. Like Mauritania's ninety thousand chattel slaves, and the slaves of the Sudan, they are prisoners of history. Over the centuries, the slave trade became so ingrained that even Charles George Gordon, the British general who became a Victorian hero trying to suppress it, is said to have remarked, "When you have got the ink that has soaked into blotting-paper out of it, then slavery will cease in these lands."

Slavery in Mauritania, as in the Sudan, breaks down along racial and tribal lines. Mauritania is ruled by northerners, people of Arab-Berber stock known as Beydanes, or "white men," who make up a third of the population. Tribes of free blacks—the largest being the Halpularr—also constitute a third of the country's people. Last and least are the Haratines, for whom slavery has become institutionalized. Many Haratine women conceive children with their Beydane masters, and these children are often raised to become slaves themselves. But not all Haratines are slaves. According to Human Rights Watch/Africa, many have held high government positions even though they might have had close relatives who are in bondage.

Tensions between the Beydanes and blacks, which had been rising since independence, came to a head in 1989 when a border dispute with neighboring Senegal unleashed ethnic violence along the river dividing the two countries. The violence spread into the interior. The Beydanes killed or deported thousands of blacks to Senegal. At the same time, Senegal deported Mauritanians.

When the bloodshed erupted, Mohammed Athie, who is a Halpularr, was serving as a political officer with the Mauritanian embassy in Washington. He was ordered to return to Mauritania, but learned that the government of Lieut. Col. Maaouiya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, who had seized power in a coup in December 1984, was conducting a purge. Mr. Athie sought political asylum in the United States. Today, he is one of thousands of refugees who cannot return.

The Mauritanian government denies that the country's blacks are oppressed or that slavery exists, but it will not allow human rights organiza-

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tions to enter the country. Observers who have entered the country report that the slave trade is discreet.

"They are very subtle now in the ways of selling the people," said Mr. Athie. Two men might meet and negotiate, and an individual will change hands. Sometimes slaves are taken out of the country, he said, adding, "We do know that some black people from Mauritania are being sent to the Gulf countries."

Fugitive slaves report that conditions are worst in the rural areas, where most of the slaves live. "There it is ancient Mauritania," one slave told Human Rights Watch/Africa. "Slaves don't even know they have rights, and they don't know anything about emancipation. I had heard of the abolition, but it had no practical effect on my life."

The Sudanese government also denies that slavery exists, although Khartoum acknowledges that its Arab militia has been holding hostages until the conflict is settled. But the Comboni Fathers and other Christian groups say that the government of Lieut. Gen. Omar Hassan al Bashir, who took power in a coup in 1989, is forcing the southern blacks of the Dinka and Nuba tribes to convert and is trying to transform the country into an Islamic state. The north and south have been fighting since 1983, and the war has killed one and a half million of the country's twenty-seven million people. Between six and eight million, mostly blacks, have lost their homes. Christian groups say government-backed militia and troops raid black villages, burning huts, killing men, stealing livestock, and taking women and children into captivity.

"My mother, my two children, two of my sister's children, and I were at home when the Arabs came," Abuk Marou Keer of Nyamlell, a blind, twenty-five-year-old woman, told Christian Solidarity International last year. "My mother tried to hide some of our belongings," she said, "and then we ran toward the river."

"We were captured at the river bank. All the captives were gathered together and we were forced to walk, carrying the property looted by our captors. We were beaten when captured and from time to time en route to our destination—an agricultural labor camp at a place called Araith, eighteen miles to the north. On the way, four male captives were murdered by the Arabs and many women raped.

"We know of two children of our friend Achan Akol Kyii who were sold at Araith and sent away with their master on a horse. We were there for nearly two months. Ten days ago we were lucky to escape. We told our guards that we were going to stretch our legs. They probably thought we could not get away because of my blindness."

Survivors of these raids say that Christians are often singled out and killed. Boys are often impressed into military service. Slaves are forced to convert to Islam. Sometimes prisoners are ransomed. Bishop Macram Max Gassis of the Sudan testified before a congressional committee last year that his church had been instrumental in the liberation of fifty abducted children. "Their parents or relatives approached me after having identified their children and needed money to be given to the abductors in order to liberate them," he said.

Such testimony has helped bring the issue before the public, and public officials have taken some steps. The United Nations has condemned the slave trade in Mauritania and the Sudan. The United States has cut off its relatively small amount of development aid to Mauritania and has opposed World Bank loans to the Sudan and Mauritania, which depend heavily on the bank for financial support. Washington has made plain to the governments of both countries that any further aid is contingent upon an end to human rights abuses and slavery and, in the case of the Sudan, an effort to end the civil war through outside mediation.

Nevertheless, the international community's clout is limited. The Organization of African Unity does not interfere in the internal affairs of its member states. The rules of the World Bank dictate that lending be determined by economic considerations, not human rights issues. The Sudan receives open support from Libya and other countries. Mauritania, part of what was once French West Africa, continues to receive aid from the French government, which argues that quiet diplomacy and economic development will prove more effective in improving human rights.

Mauritania and the Sudan remain remote in Western eyes, their people handicapped by the realities of geopolitics and economics. The average annual per capita income in both places is roughly $500. They offer no sugar or oil or cotton or tea—nothing for a latter-day Coleridge or Wordsworth to hang a boycott on. As the twenty-first century approaches, the slaves of Mauritania and the Sudan are anonymous and forgotten.

"Because they are not being killed, the international community does not care," said Mr. Athie. "But their identity is killed. They are nobody. This is wrong, terribly wrong. We think something has to be done." FT

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The America We Seek:

A Statement of Pro-Life Principle and Concern

A Troubled Conscience

1. Twenty-three years after the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* decisions, the conscience of the American people remains deeply troubled by the practice of abortion-on-demand. Because of these two decisions, abortion is legal at any time of pregnancy, for virtually any reason, in every state. This constitutes an almost completely unrestricted private license to judge who will live and who will die.

That America has the most permissive abortion regime among the world's democracies is a betrayal of the classic American promise of justice for all. That is why a new sense of moral concern is stirring throughout our country in this election year. That is why millions of Americans have refused to accept the Court's 1992 admonition to stop debating the issue.

2. To those weary of this argument, it may seem that there is nothing more to be said in the matter of abortion. We disagree.

Survey research tells us that the American people do not want a legal regime of abortion-on-demand, for any reason, at any time during a pregnancy. We believe we have an obligation to employ the arts of democratic persuasion to help reinstitute legal protection for all unborn children.

The extent of the abortion license and its reach into other areas of law and public policy is widely underestimated. We believe that, as citizens of the United States, we have the responsibility to discuss with our fellow citizens the facts of the abortion license and its impact on our common life.

Many women in crisis earnestly seek alternatives to abortion. We believe we ought to encourage those alternatives and help to provide them.

3. Pro-life service to women in crisis and pro-life advocacy on behalf of legal reform are expressions of our highest ideals as citizens of the United States. We affirm the nobility of the American democratic experiment in ordered liberty. We affirm the rule of law and the principle of equal protection under the law, even as we work to reform constitutional and statutory law so that the American legal system is, once again, congruent with the Founders' claim that the inalienable right to life is one of the great moral truths on which American democracy rests. We want an America that is open, hospitable, and caring—a community of civic friendship in which neighbors reach out to assist neighbors in distress.

4. The abortion license has helped to erode the moral foundations of the American civic community. Right now we are not the country we ought to be. That is why our national conscience is troubled. That distress is, to us, a sign of moral vitality. We speak now because we seek to defend the America we love. We speak to promote the cause of an America in which women and men, together, rebuild the fabric of civil society by acknowledging our common responsibility to serve and protect the weakest and most vulnerable among us. We speak for a rebirth of freedom in these United States: a freedom that finds its fulfillment in goodness.

The Victims of the License

5. Americans of every race, economic condition, religion, and political persuasion share a common concern today for what some have called a national "virtue-deficit." As a country, we have not paid sufficient attention to nurturing those habits of heart and mind that make democratic self-governance possible, and that undergird what the Framers of the Constitution called "civic virtue." We believe that the abortion license is a critical factor in America's virtue-deficit.

6. Abortion kills 1.5 million innocent human beings in America every year. There is no longer any serious scientific dispute that the unborn child is a human creature who dies violently in the act of abortion. This brute fact is the root of our national distress over the abortion license. Abortion kills: few would now deny that. But in order to defend the private "right" to lethal violence that is the essence of abortion, proponents of the license frequently resort to euphemisms like "products of conception" and "the termination of pregnancy."

The public dialogue is not coarsened by depictions of the reality of abortion. But a coarsening of our common life has taken place; it is evident in the lack of moral revulsion that follows one newspaper's accurate description of an abortion procedure which "breaks . . . apart" the "fetus" before "it" is "suctioned out of the uterus" or "extracted."

7. The abortion license hurts women. Some (including the narrow Supreme Court majority in the 1992 *Casey* decision) contend that the license is necessary to ensure social and economic gains for women. It is ever more clear, though, that women pay a huge price for abortion. By providing an alleged techno-

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logical "fix" for unintended pregnancy, the license has encouraged widespread male irresponsibility and predatory male sexual behavior. Abortion-on-demand has given an excuse to men who shirk their responsibilities, claiming that the child they helped to conceive ought to have been aborted, or that the woman who declined to abort may not impose on him any responsibility for her "lifestyle choice."

Fathers have also been harmed and dehumanized by the abortion license. Some watch their child killed against their will; others learn to their distress only much later that a child they would have raised is dead. Even when agreeing to support the abortion decision, fathers, like mothers, suppress their grief, deny their protective instincts, and otherwise damage themselves when they allow the killing of their own children. Abortion contributes to the marginalization of fatherhood in America which many agree is a primary cause of the alarming breakdown of American family life.

The license has thus poisoned relationships between women and men, even as it has done serious harm to the thousands of women who now suffer from the effects of post-abortion grief. The women of America do not need abortion to be full participants in our society. To suggest otherwise is to demean women, to further distort relationships between women and men, and to aggravate the difficulties of re-creating in America a community of virtue and mutual responsibility.

The Public Dimension

8. Abortion is not simply a matter of private "choice." Rather, the abortion license cuts to the heart of America's claim to being a law-governed democracy, in which equality before the law is a fundamental principle of justice. The abortion license also threatens the cultural foundations of our democratic political community. For if it becomes a settled matter in American law and in American public morality that there is, in fact, a private "right" to use lethal violence to "solve" personal, family, or social problems, then the claim of American democracy to be an expression of the people's commitment to "establish justice" will be undermined, just as it was when the law claimed the "right" to exclude certain Americans from its full protection on the basis of race. Thus the abortion issue is the crucial civil rights issue of our time.

9. A sweeping abortion license was defined unilaterally by the Supreme Court without recourse to the normal procedures of democratic debate and legislation. This in itself wounded American democracy. And the Court's persistent refusal to permit the American people to debate the basic issue of an alleged "right to abortion" in their legislatures continues to damage our democracy by alienating tens of millions of Americans from their institutions of government.

10. The Court's definition of a "right to abortion"—first enunciated as a "privacy right," then as a "liberty right" under the Fourteenth Amendment—has had other damaging effects. The language of "rights" puts the dilemma of unwanted pregnancy into a legal-adversarial context, pitting mother against child, and even father against mother. But as the common experience of humanity—and, increasingly, the findings of science—demonstrates, what hurts one party in this most intimate of human relationships hurts both parties. The America we seek is an America in which both mother and child are the subjects of our concern and our community's protection. To abuse the language of "rights" in this matter further advances the demeaning practice of reducing all human relationships in America to matters of adversarial adjudication. This is a prescription for democratic decay. For democracy rests on the foundations of civil society, and in a truly civil society, relationships between people have a far richer moral texture than that suggested by adversarial procedure.

11. The Court's vain attempt to justify the abortion license in terms of an all-encompassing right of personal autonomy has begun to infect other areas of the law. Thus the "autonomy" logic of the Court's 1992 *Casey* decision is now invoked as a warrant for a constitutional "right" to euthanasia. And if it were followed to its conclusion, this logic would require us to consider such profound human relationships as the bond between husband and wife, or the bond between parents and children, to be nothing more than matters of contract, with the claims of the autonomous individual trumping all other claims. The jurisprudence of the abortion license as a matter of personal autonomy not only sets mother against child; its logic pits wives against husbands and parents against children. Enshrined by the Court to legalize abortion-on-demand, this autonomy logic threatens to give us an America in which the only actors of consequence are the individual and the state; no other community, including the community of husband and wife, or the community of parents and children, will have effective constitutional standing.

12. The Supreme Court's insistence on a "right" to abortion has had other disturbing effects on our public life. This "right" has been used to justify the abridgment of First Amendment free speech rights, as when sidewalk counselors are threatened with legal penalties for proposing protection and care to women in crisis at the crucial moment of decision outside an abortion clinic. This "right" has been used by the Federal government to coerce state governments into providing abortions, even when state legislatures or popular referenda have clearly registered

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the people's unwillingness to use public funds for elective abortions. The abortion "right" has distorted our national health care debate as well as the debate over welfare reform. It has even had an impact on U.S. foreign policy. American attempts to impose the "right" on the rest of the world at the 1994 Cairo world conference on population and the 1995 Beijing world conference on women have been deeply resented by other countries, as have U.S. attempts to promote abortion overseas through foreign aid.

13. The Court's attempt to define a "right" to abortion has polarized institutions and professions that were once among the bulwarks of American civil society. Professional associations of lawyers, academics, teachers, and civil servants have been divided by attempts to enlist their resources and prestige in support of abortion-on-demand, and in opposition to any effort even to regulate abortion in ways held constitutional by the Supreme Court. The medical profession has been deeply divided over its relationship to the abortion license. That the practice of abortion-on-demand is now widely recognized within the medical community as contradictory to the most deeply held values of the profession of healing is, we believe, a sign of hope. Yet some medical groups now threaten to reverse this trend by coercion—for example, by requiring medical residency programs to teach and perform abortion techniques. There are also disturbing signs of the corrupting influence of the abortion license in other professions. History has been rewritten to provide specious justification for *Roe v. Wade*. The teaching of law has been similarly distorted, as have political theory and political science. Such extremism underlines the unavoidably *public* character of the abortion license. The abortion license has a perverse Midas quality—it corrupts whatever it touches.

The Way Ahead

14. Our goal is simply stated: we seek an America in which every unborn child is protected in law and welcomed in life. Legal reform and cultural renewal must both take place if America is to experience a new birth of the freedom that is ordered to goodness. We have just described, in this statement, the nature, sources, and dimension of our concern. Now, as pro-life leaders and scholars, we want to propose a program of action which we believe will appeal to Americans with open minds and hearts on this issue.

15. Means are always available to enable women to overcome the burdens that can accompany pregnancy and child-rearing. There are always alternatives to abortion. The legacy of *Roe v. Wade* involves a massive denial of this truth, and a deformation of social attitudes and practices so pervasive that women are actually encouraged to have abortions as the "easier" road to the goals that an unexpected pregnancy appears to threaten. As individuals and as a society, we bear a common responsibility to make sure that all women know that their own physical and spiritual resources, joined to those of a society that truly affirms and welcomes life, are sufficient to overcome whatever obstacles pregnancy and child-rearing may appear to present. Women instinctively know, and we should never deny, that this path will involve sacrifice. But this sacrifice must no longer remain a one-way street. In particular, men must also assume their proper share of the responsibilities that family life—indeed, civilization itself—requires.

16. The pro-life movement must redouble its efforts to provide alternatives to abortion for women in crisis. There are now over three thousand pregnancy care centers in the United States providing medical, educational, financial, and spiritual assistance to women who, facing the dilemma of a crisis pregnancy, bravely choose to carry their unborn children to term. We support an expansion of this service to our neighbors, so that by the turn of the century what we believe to be true today has become unmistakably clear to every American woman: *No one has to have an abortion in the United States.*

17. The overwhelming majority of Americans believe that adoption is preferable to abortion. We must streamline and simplify the legal procedures involved in adoption, while providing effective support to those married couples who choose to adopt.

18. The abortion license is inextricably bound up with the mores of the sexual revolution. Promotion of the pro-life cause also requires us to support and work with those who are seeking to reestablish the moral linkage between sexual expression and marriage, and between marriage and procreation. We believe that a renewal of American democracy as a virtuous society requires us to honor and promote an ethic of self-command and mutual responsibility, and to resist the siren song of the false ethic of unbridled self-expression.

19. Service to women in crisis, promoting adoption, and restoring sound sexual morality are essential if we are to experience a national cultural renewal that helps to sustain legal reform of the abortion license. The way in which we pursue the latter is also crucial, both to cultural renewal and legal reform.

We pledge ourselves to exercise the arts of democratic persuasion in advancing our legal agenda. We urge Congress and the courts to reconsider their ill-advised restrictions on the rights of pro-life activists.

We unequivocally reject the use of violence in the pro-life cause as contrary to the central moral principles of our movement. For more than twenty-three years, we have worked within the democratic process

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to advance the protection of all innocent human life, and we will continue to do so.

20. The unborn child in America today enjoys less legal protection than an endangered species of bird in a national forest. In this situation, we believe a broad-based legal and political strategy is essential. There are many steps to be taken on the road to an America in which every unborn child is protected in law and welcomed in life. Thus we find no contradiction between a rigorous adherence to our ultimate goal and the pursuit of reforms that advance us toward that goal. Legal reforms that fall short of our goal, but which help move us toward it, save lives and aid in the process of moral and cultural renewal.

21. In its 1992 *Casey* decision, the Supreme Court agreed that the state of Pennsylvania could regulate the abortion industry in a number of ways. These regulations do not afford any direct legal protection to the unborn child. Yet experience has shown that such regulations—genuine informed consent, waiting periods, parental notification—reduce abortions in a locality, especially when coupled with positive efforts to promote alternatives to abortion and service to women in crisis. A national effort to enact Pennsylvania-type regulations in all fifty states would be a modest but important step toward the America we seek.

22. Congress also has the opportunity to contribute to legal reform of the abortion license. A number of proposals are now being debated in the Congress, including bans on certain methods of abortion, a ban on late-term abortions, and restrictions on federal funding of abortions. We believe that Congress should adopt these measures and that the President should sign them into law. Any criminal sanctions considered in such legislation should fall upon abortionists, not upon women in crisis. We further urge the discussion of means by which Congress could recognize the unborn child as a human person entitled to the protection of the Constitution.

23. The right-to-life of the unborn will not be secured until it is secure under the Constitution of the United States. As it did in *Brown v. Board of Education* (when it rejected the *Plessy v. Ferguson* doctrine of "separate but equal" as an adequate expression of rights secured under the Fourteenth Amendment), the Supreme Court could reject the "central finding" of *Roe v. Wade*, that abortion-on-demand is required by an unenumerated "right to privacy" protected in part by the Fourteenth Amendment. The claim that such a correction of error would damage the Court's authority is belied by the experience of *Brown v. Board of Education*, and by the fact that the Court has corrected its own erroneous interpretations of the Constitution on scores of other occasions.

A more enduring means of constitutional reform is a constitutional amendment both reversing the doctrines of *Roe v. Wade* and *Casey*, and establishing that the right to life protected by the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments extends to the unborn child. Such an amendment would have to be ratified by three-fourths of the states: a requirement that underlines the importance of establishing a track record of progressive legal change on behalf of the unborn child at the state and local level.

Even with a constitutional amendment, every path to the protection and welcome we seek for unborn children requires the re-empowerment of the people of the United States and their elected representatives to debate and resolve the specific statutory enactments that will govern the question of abortion. A constitutional amendment, in other words, is not a self-executing instrument that will end the debate on abortion. It will, rather, correct a gross misinterpretation of the Constitution (as was required to reverse the grievous errors of the *Dred Scott* decision), and require states to debate and adopt policies that do not violate the unborn child's right to life.

Such a process does not, we emphasize, amount to the determination of moral truth by majority rule. Rather, it requires conforming fundamental constitutional principle to a fundamental moral truth—that abortion is the unwarranted taking of an innocent human life. Such a process also respects the role of representative government in fashioning policies that will ultimately secure that principle in practice. The project of constitutional reform on this issue, as on the precedent issues of slavery and segregation, is to bring our legal system into congruence with basic moral truths about the human person.

An Appeal to Our Neighbors

24. We believe the pro-life cause is an expression of the premise and promise of American democracy. The premise is that we are all created equal; the promise is that there is justice for all. For all the reasons cited above, the abortion license has done grave damage to America: it has killed tens of millions of unborn children, caused untold anguish to their mothers, and marginalized fathers in our society. The renewal of American democracy according to the highest ideals of the Founders requires us to stand for the inalienable right-to-life of the unborn, to stand with women in crisis, and to stand against the abortion license.

25. Few Americans celebrate the abortion license today. For many who are troubled by the license and its impact on our society, to be "reluctantly pro-choice" is now thought to be the responsible position. We respectfully urge those of our neighbors who hold that position to reconsider. We ask them to ponder the relationship between the abortion license

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and the crisis of family life in America. We ask them to reconsider whether radical autonomy is a sufficient understanding of freedom. We ask them to reflect, again, on the morality of abortion itself. We ask them to think about the social impact of a legally defined private "right" to lethal violence.

We ask them to ask themselves: "Is American society, today, more hospitable, caring, and responsible than it was before *Roe v. Wade*?" We believe the answer is "No." Problems that the proponents of abortion claimed the license would help alleviate—such as childhood poverty, illegitimacy, and child abuse—have in fact gotten worse, throughout every level of our society, since *Roe v. Wade*. Thus we respectfully ask our neighbors to consider the possibility of a connection—cultural as well as legal—between the virtue-deficit in contemporary American life and the abortion license.

26. The pro-life movement is about affirmation. Thus we ask our neighbors, of whatever political persuasion or current conviction on the matter of abortion, to engage in a great national debate about the America we seek, and the relationship of the abortion license to that future. We ask all Americans to join with us in providing effective, compassionate service to women in crisis. Work on alternatives to abortion and on the reform of adoption laws and procedures can create the conditions for a new dialogue on the future of abortion law and practice in America. We are ready for that new conversation. We invite all our neighbors to join us.

Mary Cunningham Agee
The Nurturing Network

Don Argue
National Association of Evangelicals

Hadley Arkes
Amherst College

Gary Bauer
Family Research Council

Robert P. Casey
Fund for the American Family
Campaign for the American Family

Samuel B. Casey
The Center for Law and Religious Freedom
Christian Legal Society

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Prison Fellowship

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Review Essay

A Harvest of Evangelical Theology

Carl E. Braaten

Holy Scripture. Revelation, Inspiration, and Interpretation. By Donald G. Bloesch. *InterVarsity Press. 384 pp. $24.99.*

Theology for the Community of God. By Stanley J. Grenz. *Broadman & Holman. 890 pp. $39.99.*

Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine. By Wayne Grudem. *Zondervan. 1,264 pp. $39.99.*

Systematic Theology: Doctrine. Volume II. By James William McClendon, Jr. *Abingdon Press. 536 pp. $19.95.*

Christian Theology: An Introduction. By Alister E. McGrath. *Blackwell. 510 pp. $59.95 cloth, $20.95 paper.*

Not Every Spirit: A Dogmatics of Christian Disbelief. By Christopher Morse. *Trinity Press International. 417 pp. $40 cloth, $22 paper.*

I

Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) announced: "Dogmatics is a discipline that exists today only in the narrowest of theological circles, and even there it languishes." The announcement was hardly out of his mouth before Karl Barth pioneered a remarkable renewal of the dogmatic enterprise. And Barth was by no means alone. Consider the remarkable outpouring of dogmatics in Germany during most of the twentieth century, beginning with Barth and up through, most recently, Wolfhart Pannenberg's three-volume systematics. Among other producers of weighty systematics in this century are, inter alia, Emil Brunner, Karl Heim, Franz Pieper, Michael Schmaus, Paul Althaus, Otto Weber, Heinrich Vogel, Fritz Buri, Paul Tillich, Edmund Schlink, and Gerhard Ebeling. That circle is not narrow; it includes theologians from liberal Protestant, Reformed, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic traditions.

Now, it seems, the initiative in the writing of dogmatics has been seized by evangelical theologians in America. No doubt, German professors will continue to publish their summas to cap off their careers. But after Pannenberg, the interest in Germany theology would seem to be on the wane. Most of what is being written there has the feel of having been recycled once too often. And in the United States, most mainline Protestant and progressive Catholic theology has landed in the graveyard of dogmatics, which is that mode of thinking George Lindbeck calls "experiential expressivism." Individuals and groups vent their own religious experience and call it theology. J. C. K. von Hofmann described the approach: "As a Christian I am myself the object of my thinking as a theologian." The result can be interesting spiritual autobiography, but it is not theology. It is certainly not dogmatic theology.

It would be hard to deny that the reduction of theology to experience is closely connected to the collapse of biblical authority in Protestant thought and to dissent from the Church's teaching office among Roman Catholics. The six volumes that prompt this reflection are all written by evangelical Protestants, which means they come from communities that have placed a high premium on religious experience. I expect all the authors would agree with Luther's dictum, "It is the heart that makes the theologian" *(theologia pectoralis)*. One can agree with that dictum, however, without making experience the source and norm of theology. In a day when much that passes for Christian theology begins and ends with slight reference to the apostolic tradition that is the core of the faith, one welcomes these works, all published in the past two years and all focused on what is of first importance: the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. These theologians know that the gospel can only be given *to* experience, and can never arise *out of* experience. God, not religious experience, is the *fons et origo*.

In April 1991, Gabriel Fackre, an evangelical Protestant, gave his presidential address to the American Theological Society, "The State of Systematics: Research and Commentary." There he challenged the common opinion that dogmatics is dead or dying, and called attention to a new generation of evangelical systematicians. This came as something of a surprise to his audience, mainly composed of theologians to whom the evangelical world has been terra incognita. Evangelicalism, in their view, was chiefly associated with Billy Graham and "born again" enthusiasms. It is not the world in which one would expect to find a keen interest in dogmatics, where the emphasis is on thinking and thinking rightly about the faith in continuity with the dogmas

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of the ancient church. Yet these books testify to the fact that the energy devoted to dogmatics by evangelicals today is far greater than among liberal or liberationist Protestants and Catholics.

II

There is no firm agreement on what is meant by "evangelical" today, and that diversity is reflected in these books. David Wells of Gordon-Conwell Seminary has written extensively, and critically, on the state of evangelical theology. He has opined that "what is now primary is not what is evangelical but what is adjectivally distinctive, whether Catholic, liberationalist, feminist, ecumenist, young, orthodox, radical, liberal, or charismatic." Evangelicalism, he says, has become "a family of hybrids. . . . It is, I believe, the dark prelude to death, when parasites have finally succeeded in bringing down their host. Amid the clamor of all these new models of evangelical faith there is the sound of a death rattle."

Wells acknowledges that there may be something of a renaissance of theological writing among evangelicals, but he doubts such writing makes much of a difference. Who buys these tomes? Who reads them? Who cares? Wells and others claim to see happening today in evangelicalism what many of us witnessed in mainline Protestantism: the theological center does not hold. Theology today looks for novelty, for green grass at the edges of the Christian faith. It concocts "creative" substitutes for traditional language and liturgy, and thus makes itself increasingly alien to the lived experience of the Church. When this happens, a vacuum is created that invites the idols of modernity. Wells writes, "I do not believe in modernity at all. Most evangelicals, however, are mild, closet believers, and to the extent that this is true, their internal life will tend to tilt away from belief in God and His truth and toward modernity."

These six books, however, do not support that doleful assessment. They are deeply anchored in the scriptural sources and exemplify the traditional evangelical principle of the primacy of the Word. They mediate and moderate the classical debates in the history of doctrine; for example, between Arius and Athanasius, Pelagius and Augustine, Luther and Rome, Arminianism and Calvinism. There are also curious features that these books have in common. Though Luther is often and for the most part favorably quoted, there is an almost eerie silence on Luther's debate with Erasmus of Rotterdam, as though this were tangential to the theology of the Reformer. Also Zwingli and Arminius get only bit parts, although these authors generally tilt leftward—as the sixteenth century defined left and right—on questions of sacraments and free will.

This, too, points up the diversity within the community of those called evangelicals. On divine providence and human action, some are closer to Calvin, others to Arminius. The Zwinglians and Calvinists divide on the presence of Christ at the Lord's Supper. Some evangelicals are Anabaptists, while others line up with Calvin and Luther on baptismal regeneration. And so forth. Evangelicals are by no means agreed on the true line of succession in Protestantism. For most of these writers, the sixteenth-century issues remain unresolved. With exceptions, evangelical theologians and their communities have not been part of the ecumenical dialogues of the last quarter century between Protestant traditions and between Protestants and Roman Catholics. In these dialogues focused on the disputes of the sixteenth century, Pelagianism, Zwinglianism, and Arminianism are brought into the sunlight for critical examination, whereas for theologians who have not participated in the dialogues they tend to fester beneath the surface.

There are exceptions, of course. When pressed to choose, Alister McGrath and Donald Bloesch, for example, opt for Calvin over the Anabaptists, and for Protestant orthodoxy over pietism. When trying to sort out evangelicals and evangelicalisms, denominational identity no longer serves. The authors of these texts are Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Anglican, and Reformed, but you cannot reliably tell their theology by where they hang their hat, so to speak. Moreover, they all want to maintain continuity with historic Protestant orthodoxy, but it is by no means clear what that means. Is there now or has there ever been a common structure of doctrines that holds the evangelical world together?

Protestantism was born in controversy over what constitutes the theological center, and history has not given it a moment's respite from internal discords. The notion that, once upon a time, there was an orthodox Protestant consensus to which evangelicals could appeal is a myth. The differences among Protestants proved to be as great and as basic as their differences with Rome. Then and now, it is not possible to construct a common Protestant orthodoxy from disagreements so deep as those between, for example, Luther, Calvin, and Muentzer. The whole history subsequent to the sixteenth century was one of deepening these disagreements. This is the problem facing those who want to set forth what is simply called "evangelical" theology. The adjectives—feminist, liberationist, charismatic, et al.—become necessary to indicate what kind of theology one is writing. While a death rattle does not sound from these books, a crisis is evident enough; and the crisis is that the connection between theology and the Church has become elusive and problematic.

III

Ours is an ecumenical age in which councils and churches have engaged in an intensive quest for the true identity and integrity of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. These evangelical

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authors are fully committed to the proposition that theology exists for the Church. Stanley Grenz titles his enterprise *Theology for the Community of God.* "Theology," he writes, "is the task of the faith community; it is a community act." The question is: which church? And what makes that church participant in the Church? David Wells says the crisis in evangelicalism is theological, the marginalization of theology per se, leading inexorably to an embrace of modernity and secularization. An alternative analysis suggests itself. Evangelicalism, like other forms of Protestantism, may now be facing the ecclesiological crisis that ecumenism has brought home to us.

These texts, I believe, are not sufficiently alert to the scandal of the divided Church and the way this calls into question the dogmatics written by a single author for any particular voluntary association calling itself church. In a pre-ecumenical age, a dogmatician could write a system of doctrine for the training of clergy and the edification of members of the particular community to which he belonged—Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist, or whatever. Such a parochial approach will no longer do when one is held to the higher criterion of teaching in accord with the apostolic faith confessed in the catholic creeds. These creeds express the chief dogmas defined by church authority as being true to God's revelation in Scripture. To cream off the creeds and dogmas of the ancient Church, while ignoring the ecclesial structures that authorized them as God-given truth, is not very convincing.

How can one separate the authority of what is said from who said it? Evangelical Protestants appeal to Scripture as the sole authority, but the canon of Scripture is itself one of those decisions—along with the trinitarian and Christological dogmas—that call for confidence in the trustworthiness of the Church and the authority of the Church. A purely biblical dogmatics that claims to go straight to Scripture—bypassing the question of the Church's authority in exegeting, interpreting, and transmitting the beliefs of the community for which this book and none other is Holy Writ—is surely self-deluded.

Yet this seems to be what is going on in Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine.* His method is captive to the fundamentalist notion that the canon of biblical texts and their interpretation can be detached from the community that determined canonicity in the first place. The other books give some sign of an awakening to the intrinsic place of the Church and its authority in a hermeneutic of dogmatic inquiry. As this awakening grows, we might expect that evangelical theology will seek to reconnect more believably with the more catholic streams of church tradition. That there are individuals and even entire congregations of evangelicals now converting to Eastern Orthodoxy or Roman Catholicism is evidence of a hunger not only for the gospel but for the Church to which God has entrusted its proclamation.

IV

These six texts also reflect a divided mind about the connection between the Enlightenment and modern theology. Grudem completely ignores the post-Enlightenment traditions of modern Protestant theology. Apparently it all came to a screeching halt with Schleiermacher (1768-1834). Grudem's aim is to repristinate only conservative renderings of biblical doctrine, almost exclusively from the Reformed heritage. He piles up biblical proof-texts in blithe indifference to critical scholarship.

Bloesch, on the other hand, represents the neo-orthodox side of evangelicalism, reflecting the struggles within Protestant theology for a post-critical doctrine of Scripture that steers between fundamentalism and modernism. He says, "I wish to defend the orthodox evangelical faith—from its friends as well as from its enemies." He tends to agree with Karl Barth's critique of liberal theology, but he is no less critical of fundamentalism for its bondage to a rationalistic epistemology and concept of truth. Bloesch fails to note, however, that the battle between modernism and fundamentalism is a feud within the same family. They are in fact twins, since both approach Scripture with a method and mindset that ignore the Church.

Grenz, McGrath, James McClendon, and Christopher Morse take full cognizance of the contributions of the leading modern theologians. Grenz has leaned heavily on the thought of Pannenberg, whom he names as his mentor. But he is also and very self-consciously faithful to his own pietist Baptist roots. He unabashedly defends the hallmarks of that tradition, especially with respect to the nature of the Church as a covenant community, congregationalist polity, believers' baptism, and a symbolic (Zwinglian) view of the Lord's Supper.

McGrath has written an introductory textbook that attempts to bring together the history of doctrine and systematic theology in one volume. One can easily predict that it will be widely used as a textbook, for he lets the Church and its classic traditions speak for themselves, rather than expostulating on his own arguments and opinions. His own constructive work takes the form of addressing, in light of Scripture and tradition, some of the burning issues in the Church today. The happy result is that the shape of the questions is contemporary, while the substance of the answers is deeply traditional.

The books by McClendon and Morse are the most original in style and substance. McClendon's is the second volume of his systematics trilogy. The first was titled *Ethics,* and the third will be an apologia for his way of doing theology, more or less in line with William Placher's concept of "unapologetic theology." McClendon treats the whole of the Christian

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faith from the perspective of one who affirms the "radical reformation." Taking a cue from Jürgen Moltmann, he begins from the end—that is, he begins with eschatology. This is rooted in the Baptist experience of church as a Spirit-filled, mission-driven community of eschatological expectation. This approach, he says, is underrepresented in recent theology, and his aim is to rectify the deficit. The debate in ecclesiology is thus not merely two-sided—between Protestants and Catholics—but three-sided, with Baptists representing a distinctly third type, neither Protestant nor Catholic. This is not without its problems. Thinking in terms of historic types that deserve to be represented may suffice for determining who should attend an ecumenical theology conference. All voices have a right to be heard, but that does not make them right, dogmatically speaking. The truth we seek in dogmatic inquiry cannot be determined by assuring a fair representation of preferences.

Furthermore, McClendon's typology does not include Eastern Orthodoxy, an ecclesiological tradition even more underrepresented than the Baptist/Pentecostal type in modern theology. And one must ask whether it would not be more useful in an ecumenical age to reinterpret the Baptist communities that trace their lineage back to the radical reformation. They might be seen as valid representatives of a spiritual movement *within* the one holy catholic and apostolic Church, rather than, as the radical reformers claimed, a rebirth of the church of the New Testament. Such a move might parallel the reassessment of Luther's magisterial reformation as a confessing movement within the one Church of the West, rather than as the intentional creation of a new and independent church.

McClendon's book reinforces our thesis that the crisis in evangelical theology is an ecclesiological crisis. Admittedly, facing this crisis in a straightforward way raises the question of the ecclesial identity and permanent legitimacy of Protestantism and its multiple subtypes. We cannot expect evangelical theologians to resolve the ecclesiological problems that have preoccupied so many in this century. But it is discouraging that they shy away from even addressing the challenges that might throw into question their too comfortable ecclesial identities.

Morse's *Not Every Spirit: A Dogmatics of Christian Disbelief* is a fascinating work that deserves more attention than can be given it here. It belongs in the class of "evangelical theology" only in the most general sense. Conservative evangelical authors are not mentioned nor is their agenda pursued. Its sights line up with the towering figures in the classical stream of Christian thought: Irenaeus, Athanasius, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Schleiermacher, Barth, Moltmann, Pannenberg. Morse can be placed toward the liberal end of the neo-orthodox spectrum of Protestant theology. His argument is that Christian truths can be illuminated by reference to their negations. If we believe X, what is it then that we do not believe? "Entailed in the faith that Jesus was Lord was the disbelief of Caesar as Lord," Morse writes. The insight is not new to historical scholarship; the creeds and confessions of the Church frequently linked their affirmations to condemnations. But I can think of no system of dogmatics that ever adopted it as the key principle of interpretation.

Given that principle, it is the more disappointing that *Not Every Spirit* is marred by a "politically correct" tendency to accommodate the prevailing zeitgeist in liberal Protestant churches and seminaries. Morse's catalogue of disbeliefs does not extend to the popular feminist belief that the triune name of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is sexist and reflects gender bias; he endorses the gay/lesbian belief that the practice of homosexuality is compatible with biblical faith; he accepts the pluralist hypothesis that "one may confess the reality of Jesus Christ without ever having heard or ever being aware of the words 'Jesus Christ,' or intending a 'Christian' witness." The book would be much the stronger if, on these and other questions, Morse extended his catalogue of disbeliefs in a more courageous—dare I say dogmatic—manner.

V

Our survey confirms the observation that evangelicals come in quite different versions. There are evangelical fundamentalists (Wayne Grudem), evangelical pietists (Stanley Grenz), evangelical pentecostals (James McClendon), evangelical neo-orthodox (Donald Bloesch), evangelical Anglicans (Alister McGrath), and evangelical liberals (Christopher Morse). And that list does not exhaust the variety by any means. Evangelicals revel in Protestant freedom, but keep up the fight against the doctrinal anarchy it spawns in their midst; they share the inner turmoil of evangelicalism, but offer few pointers to a way forward; they diligently mine the sources of the great tradition, but betray a consistent antipathy to the ecclesiastical authority by which that tradition is defined.

These books reflect what is called, perhaps euphemistically, the creative flux within American evangelicalism, and there is no denying that the work represented by these writers has an important bearing on the future of the Christian reality in this country and elsewhere. Like many others, I will continue to watch with sympathetic interest. But I hope I will not be misunderstood if I say that I think I've read enough evangelical dogmatics to last for a while. FT

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Books In Review

The Remaking of a Marxist

The Southern Front: History and Politics in the Culture War. By Eugene D. Genovese. *University of Missouri Press. 320 pp. $29.95.*

Reviewed by **Nancy R. Pearcey**

The South has conquered Washington, Michael Lind fumed last summer in a *New Republic* article titled "The Southern Coup." Whether Lind is correct or merely paranoid, there's no denying that southern political philosophy is gaining persuasive power, thanks in no small part to the work of historian Eugene Genovese. This Brooklyn-born Yankee of Sicilian origins—a Marxist who supported the Soviet Union "until there was nothing left to support"—surprised himself by becoming an admirer of southern culture. In *The Southern Front,* a collection of essays and reviews, Genovese reveals how his study of the Old South, especially its religion, challenged and changed his own Marxist convictions.

Genovese took up southern history reluctantly, after a professor challenged him to test his Marxism by taking the slaveholders as a laboratory case in "how a ruling class really rules." His initial forays, Genovese writes, were marked by "the biases of an atheist and a historical materialist"—to whit, that religion was "no more than a corrosive ideology at the service of ruling classes." If at the beginning, Genovese says ruefully, "someone had told me that religion would emerge as a positive force in my book—indeed, as the centerpiece—I would have laughed and referred him to a psychiatrist. In the end, the evidence proved overwhelming, and I had to eat my biases."

What was the evidence, and which biases was Genovese forced to choke down? Fundamentally, he discovered that Marxism gravely underestimates the power of religion. Among both black and white southerners, Genovese writes, "the overpowering evidence of religious faith aroused in me a skepticism about the reigning tendency in Academia to, as it were, sociologize faith out of religion—to deny the reality of spirituality." Among the slaves, Christian faith "carried an extraordinarily powerful message of liberation in this world as well as the next." It empowered them to create a vibrant culture under extreme adversity—a dynamic not explainable in Marxist or any other sociological terms. As Genovese writes, "No such theory or

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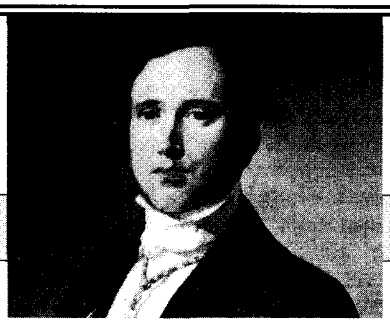
DONOSO CORTES

Cassandra of the Age

R. A. Herrera



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combination of theories could suffice to explain the power of the folk religion, as manifested, for example, in the spirituals." Unfortunately, he does not elaborate on the slaves' religion, having given a masterful description in his 1972 book *Roll, Jordan, Roll*. There he argued that Christianity saved the slaves from dehumanization by instilling a sense of spiritual freedom and equality.

The religion of white southerners does, however, receive considerable attention here. Historians typically assume that the slaveholders used religion cynically as a method of social control. But Genovese breaks ranks. Evidence reveals that both slaveholders and freeholders "genuinely qualified as believers." Indeed, their common faith created a powerful bond across the boundaries of social class, something "neither Marxism nor any other historical or sociological theory can fully account for." Consequently, Marxists "are compelled to reconsider their very notion of social class"—to acknowledge "the centrality of the Christian message" in addition to economic forces in the formation of social relations.

Yet the very fact that many southerners *were* sincere Christians raises a troubling question—one Genovese returns to repeatedly: How was it possible for decent, intelligent, God-fearing people to participate in "the greatest enormity of the age," the injustice of slavery? His answer is that many southerners did recoil from the practice. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, southerners typically viewed slavery as an evil or, at best, a misfortune. Even proslavery apologists, such as theologian James Henley Thornwell, ruthlessly criticized its evils and demanded laws to punish cruel masters and permit slaves to read. The "militantly proslavery" Frederick Ross considered it a temporary form of labor, destined to die out. In short, Genovese writes, many southerners demanded that slavery "be made to conform to biblical standards," while preaching "a doctrine of ultimate deliverance under Christian tutelage."

IN THE DECADES before the Civil War, however, as slavery came under harsher attack, southerners retrenched. They began to cast slavery as a positive alternative to the problem of labor created by the industrial revolution. Like Marx, southern intellectuals decried the immiseration of the proletariat. They pointed to the northern cities, infected with crime and poverty, and predicted class war and revolution. The crux of the problem, as they saw it, was that under industrialism the elites took no social responsibility for the working classes. By contrast, slavery was an organic, personal, face-to-face relation; it was an extension of the "household" (which, in prein-

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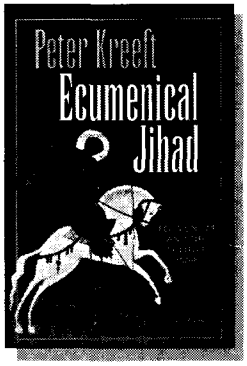
by Peter Kreeft

Juxtaposing "ecumenism" and "jihad", two words that many would consider at odds with each other, Peter Kreeft argues that we need to change our current alignments. We need to realize that we are at war and that the sides have changed radically: many of our former enemies (e.g. Muslims) are now our friends, and some of our former friends (e.g. humanists) are now our enemies. Documenting the spiritual and moral decay of modern society, Kreeft issues a wake-up call to all God-fearing Christians, Jews and Muslims to unite together in a "religious war" against the common enemy of godless secular humanism, materialism and immorality.



Aware of the deep theological differences between these monotheistic faiths, Kreeft calls for a moratorium on our polemics against each other so that we can form an alliance to fight together to save western civilization. God is calling for this unity, Kreeft says, and if we respond, God will do something wonderful.

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dustrial societies, included dependent laborers). In journals and letters southerners spoke of "my family, white and black." Southern intellectuals thus interpreted slavery as the material base of a superior social order in which the privileged classes took personal responsibility for workers.

Nor did it end there. In rejecting industrialism, southerners rejected a raft of modernist ideas following in its wake: atomistic individualism, radical egalitarianism, theological liberalism, political centralization, and a marketplace mentality that reduces everything to commodities. On all counts, Genovese's sympathies lie decidedly with the South: He praises the slaveholders' "unshakable insight that bourgeois social relations irresistibly generated a self-revolutionizing social and economic system that dissolved family and community and made the marketplace the arbiter of moral and social life." As an alternative, southern intellectuals cast the plantation community as heir to the organic communities of premodern Europe; their defense of slavery was one strain "in a much broader defense of Christendom" against the disintegrating tendencies of modernity.

Yet while southern intellectuals hoped to fashion a Christian social order based on slavery, Genovese writes, Christianity also provided resources to *end* slavery. Here is a remarkable tension often misunderstood. In the academy today it is fashionable to charge Western religion with complicity in a host of social evils: slavery, racism, sexism, imperialism. But Genovese will have none of that. All civilizations have been disfigured by various evils, he argues. What sets the Christian West apart is that it alone raised "a profound theoretical opposition to those enormities, challenging their moral foundations and raising mass movements against them."

No matter how kind or decent individual slaveholders may have been, the institution of slavery was itself inherently unjust, since it reduced human beings to economic property to be bought and sold. (This was also the fatal flaw in southerners' claim that slavery was organic—i.e., outside the marketplace.) Against slavery and other injustices, Christianity alone "contributed a body of teaching that has made possible a line of resistance and counterattack," providing "the moral ground on which the exponents of freedom could stand." Specifically, the Christian teaching that we are created in the image of God "denies the right of any individual or state to treat human beings as objects of social engineering rather than as discrete personalities sacred in the sight of God." Until nonbelievers can match that performance, Genovese comments dryly, "they would do well to temper their criti-

Take & Read

SPIRITUAL READING:

An Annotated List

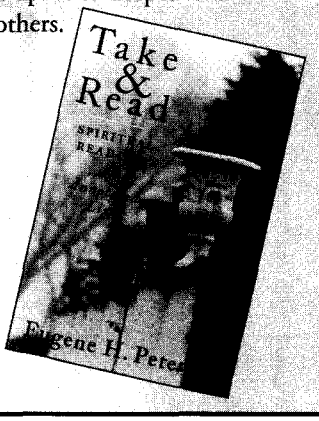
Eugene H. Peterson

"Spiritual reading," writes Eugene Peterson, "has fallen on bad times." Where once attention to literature was a prized arrow in the quiver of those determined to cultivate a God-aware life, today reading is largely a consumer activity. People devour books, magazines, pamphlets, and newspapers simply for information that may fuel their ambition or careers or competence — and the faster the better.

Take and Read represents Peterson's attempt to rekindle the activity of spiritual reading. For Peterson, "spiritual" reading refers not so much to the *content* of what is read but to the *way* in which a book is read. Spiritual reading means reading any book that comes to hand in a spiritual way, tuned to the Spirit, alert to intimations of God.

The present volume is an annotated list of the books that have stood the test of time and that, for Peterson, are spiritually formative in the Christian life.

The books on this list range from standard spiritual classics to novels, poems, and mysteries, and include a broad spectrum of authors. Annotations following each entry offer Peterson's own significant insights into the power of each work. Though not all the titles found here are explicitly Christian, what they all have in common, according to Peterson, is that they have been used by the Spirit to deepen and nourish his own life, and may be used so for others.



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cism and to look to their own moral responsibilities."

MINDING HIS OWN COUNSEL, Genovese moves from the Old South to modern Marxism, with poignant reflections on the moral responsibilities of the political movement he calls his own. Bluntly stated, "We ended a seventy-year experiment with socialism with little more to our credit than tens of millions of corpses." These horrors did not arise from perversions of Marxism, Genovese notes, "but from the ideology itself"—from a "deep flaw in our very understanding of human nature" and from "our inability to replace the moral and ethical baseline long provided by the religion we have dismissed with indifference, not to say contempt." Needless to say, today Genovese harbors no trace of contempt toward Christianity. He urges his Marxist colleagues to reconsider "the Christian idea of justice and equality before God," and to weigh it against "our own blood-drenched romance with the utopia of a man-made heaven here on earth."

Other contemporary issues Genovese discusses include the theology of Martin Luther King, Jr., the credibility of black studies, and the validity of black cultural autonomy in contrast to black separatism, which he castigates for its nihilistic repudiation of Western traditions: "Does anyone in his right mind advocate a separate black path of development unillumined by the Christian tradition of spiritual freedom?" The book also brings readers up to date on the southern intellectual tradition, with pieces on Clyde Wilson, John Shelton Reed, and the late M. E. Bradford, heirs of the southern agrarians. That tradition contains much that "remains defensible," Genovese writes, and he would agree with Russell Kirk who considered it "an important mode" of conservative thought. While Michael Lind's fulminations about a southern coup are wildly overstated, Genovese's more restrained imagery presents southern political philosophy as one front in today's culture war.

He does quarrel with southern conservatives, however, over the impact of slavery on the tradition they revere. Apologists for the South typically stress the independent freeholders as shapers of the region's ethos, while tracing its origin ultimately to the older Christian civilization of Europe. "This will not do," Genovese admonishes. Europeans spread Christian culture throughout America, yet only the South doggedly opposed the forces of modernity. Why? Because its premodern economy provided a material alternative to industrialism. While other critics of modernity, such as the Romantics, were retreating into the realm of personal feeling, southerners rooted their opposition in a geographical region with an alternative social system and real political power.

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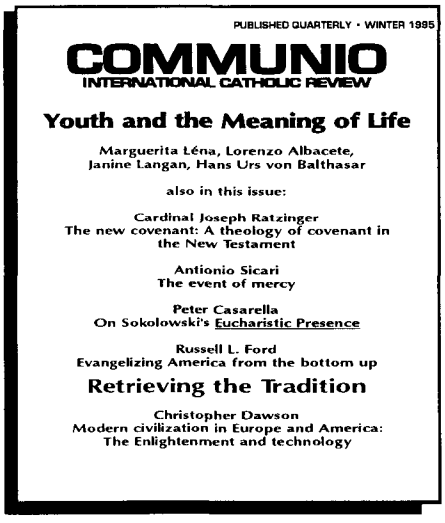
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This is a bracing antidote to idealist interpretations of history. Yet Genovese's own writing often veers toward the opposite error, with overtones of economic determinism. He describes slaveholding as "the essence" of Southern society; he writes that the "moral imperatives" of a slave economy "demanded" a communitarian ethos—that antebellum southerners "could not" accept autonomous individualism. In such passages, Genovese comes close to saying that a society's material base is determinative of its character and culture. He appears to forget his own findings of the power of religious faith to transcend economic relations. He appears to forget his own conclusion that Marxism failed not for economic reasons but because of a sub-Christian view of human nature.

In short, Genovese seems to waver between his ongoing commitment to a chastened Marxism and his profound encounter with the power of Christianity to generate culture—and to regenerate individuals. His wife, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, has apparently had a similar encounter, for she recently entered the Catholic Church. Those of us who admire Genovese as a scholar and historian might pray that he, too, will eventually cross the threshold of faith. To borrow the concluding line from one of the essays in this book: "May the Holy Spirit be with him."

Integral or Divided?

Integrity. By Stephen L. Carter. *Basic Books. 261 pp. $24.*

***Reviewed by* Gilbert Meilaender**

I am probably the wrong person to review this book. Although I don't much like playing card games, one that I do like a lot is a game called *Rage*. What I like about it is that players are "permitted" to cheat. Of course, if your opponents catch you in the act, you suffer a penalty. But if they don't, you enjoy the feeling of having won even when you really didn't have the cards. I don't think Stephen Carter would approve. For example, he seems very upset by those who try to fool the official in a game of football, whereas it seems to me quite an acceptable part of the game. In short, there may be places where either this book is too serious for me or I am too frivolous for it.

Despite the moments when it seems a bit earnest, however, *Integrity* is both good and interesting in many ways. It is the first in a projected trilogy that will include volumes on *Civility* and *Decency*. Whether that will turn out to be too much of a good thing I'm not sure,

Gilbert Meilaender, *a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of* First Things, *is author of* Letters to Ellen *(Eerdmans).*

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but certainly we should applaud Carter's attempt to write about the moral life in a manner that is accessible not just to scholars but to general readers. We should applaud also his willingness to talk not only about a few intractable moral dilemmas but also about the problems of everyday life.

Readers interested in such problems are likely to find least helpful Part I ("Explanations") of the book in which Carter defines what he means by integrity. Part II ("Applications") is, by contrast, interesting and often insightful as Carter discusses integrity in the academy, the press, the legal profession, marriage, and the world of sports. Part III ("Ruminations") moves from ethics toward politics, treating important questions, though with less argumentative precision than Part II.

PUT MOST SIMPLY, Carter understands integrity as having the courage of one's convictions. And that simple theme does, in fact, reappear at a number of points in his discussion of particular moral issues. More precisely, however, he describes integrity in terms of three characteristics: (1) One must take pains to try to *discern* what is right or wrong. (2) One must be willing to shape one's *actions* in accord with that discernment, even when it is difficult or painful to do so. (3) One must be willing to *acknowledge* publicly what one is doing. In short, a person of integrity must be reflective, steadfast, trustworthy—and whole. "A person of integrity . . . is a whole person, a person somehow undivided." This more developed three-part definition is harder to trace throughout Carter's "applications"; indeed, the notion of integrity at work in them often seems simply to be having the courage of one's convictions, and it is not always clear what the more involved definition adds to the discussion.

The more complicated definition does, however, raise some very difficult theoretical issues. In "The Problem of Thor Bridge," one of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, Dr. Watson provides the following description of Mr. Neil Gibson, who has come to consult with Holmes: "His tall, gaunt, craggy figure had a suggestion of hunger and rapacity. An Abraham Lincoln keyed to base uses instead of high ones would give some idea of the man." The question, though, is whether that is possible: a man with Lincoln's virtues, but with those virtues "keyed to base uses instead of high ones." By building discernment of right and wrong into his definition of integrity, Carter makes it difficult to imagine a person of integrity doing what is wrong. That makes the moral life a little too uncomplicated; it relieves us of the terror engendered by the realization that bad things can be done by people whom

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we in some ways admire greatly.

Carter does not want to ignore such complications. Indeed, he says explicitly that we can admire the integrity of those we believe to be wrong. He manages this by distinguishing between those who do what is wrong and those who do certain great evils (which, he thinks, a reasonable person could never discern as right). He identifies—and discusses all too briefly—three such evils in his concluding chapter: racial hatred, violence based on difference, and violence resulting from a closed mind. Why violence based on difference rather than violence based on, say, greed he does not make clear. We are not, therefore, sure whether the problem is violence or whether it is hostility toward those who are different. Much the same is true with violence resulting from a closed mind. In that instance he seems to suggest that the problem is not just violence but the closed mind, since "democracy demands dialogue." He never presses himself, however, to ponder whether there are possibilties it would be corrupting even to contemplate and debate.

Many of the "application" chapters in Part II are more penetrating, and in my judgment these chapters will be more useful to readers. One can find here thoughtful discussions of freedom of speech and of the press. One can read a sensitive exploration of the difficulties jurors and, especially, lawyers face. Thus, for example, without denying or obscuring the problems lawyers confront when trying to act with integrity on behalf of their clients, Carter also does not ignore the importance of an adversarial system of justice and of having an "advocate" within such a system. His depiction of the lawyer as the only friend the accused may have is compelling and convincing. Just as interesting, if more mundane, is his discussion of the way academicians write letters of recommendation, routinely dispensing superlatives and inflating grades.

Two chapters in Part II are devoted to marriage, and in them Carter is refreshingly direct. A person of integrity must, he argues, struggle long and hard against the temptations that would lead to failure in marriage. The vow is taken precisely because we know how often conflicting desires may keep us from realizing the good to which husband and wife commit themselves. By taking a vow that limits our freedom, "we free ourselves to be better and truer people for our spouses." Without that restriction the good of marriage cannot be realized.

Carter does not oppose divorce in every instance, and, in fact, he advocates a notion of "integral divorce" that may be incoherent. (People who could achieve what he calls an integral divorce are probably quite able to stay married.) But even here

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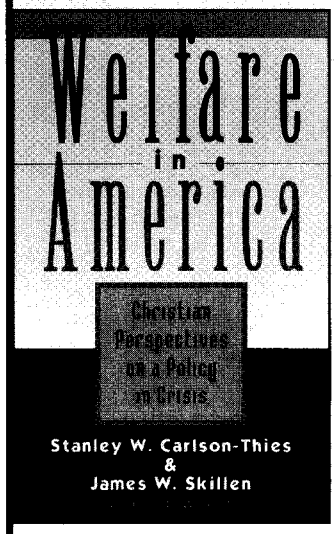

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Carter is better than our churches often are. He asks, all too reasonably, why churches would be willing to solemnize the marriage of a divorced person whose spouse had not consented to the divorce, and he finds it "truly bizarre that a church in which marriages are sealed in the name of God would give decisive effect to a civil divorce," by presiding over a second marriage.

More important, he sees good reasons for many couples to remain together; he argues that their principal concern should be what is best for their children; he thinks that children are harmed more by divorce than by their parents' less-than-optimal marriage; and he suggests that quite often parents should "swallow their own pains and needs," eschewing the "trendy contemporary philosophy that we can make others happy only when we are happy ourselves."

Part II closes with an excellent chapter on civil disobedience, in which the theme of integrity comes again to the forefront. Although he recognizes certain exceptional circumstances, Carter argues that in most instances integrity requires that one who practices civil disobedience be ready and willing to accept punishment for that disobedience. Without such willingness, civil disobedience is difficult to distinguish from political resistance. He recognizes also that religions are "natural centers of dissent" in our world, arguing forcefully that expression of religious belief cannot be excluded from the public sphere. I do not think he takes as seriously as he might the way in which religious belief may divide the self and make it difficult to achieve the wholeness he defines as a part of integrity, but he does recognize its centrality in life.

When in Part III he turns to developing a "politics of integrity," Carter outlines eight principles that ought to guide our public life. General as they are (e.g., "everybody gets to play"), they still form a good basis for beginning reflection on how to conduct political argument. And here again Carter emphasizes that we cannot say that "everybody gets to play" if we simultaneously "craft a vision of public life in which America's religious traditions play no important roles." Among his eight principles is one which states that "Our politics must call us to our higher selves." Without denying at least some truth to such a statement, I think Carter's own religious convictions might lead him to be more cautious about connecting politics with our higher self, more appreciative of interest-group politics, more attuned to intractable divisions that make wholeness a questionable political goal, and more sensitive to the Niebuhrian insight that politics is a realm where justice and power must meet and work out their uneasy compromises.

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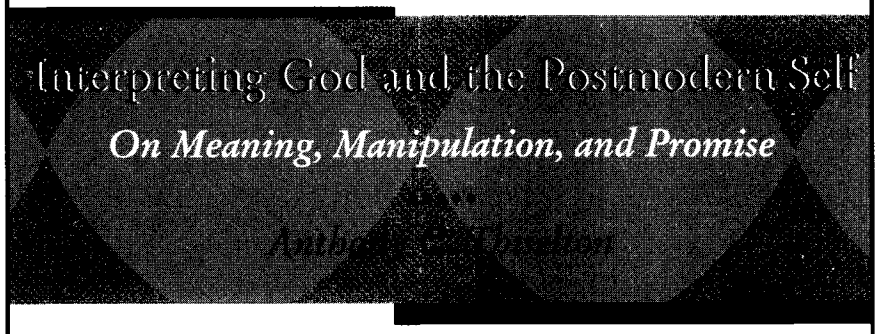

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Along the way, Carter allows himself a puzzling "interlude" on the problem of abortion, arguing that we must get over our tendency to regard it as our most important domestic political issue. He writes:

> It is shameful that so many otherwise principled liberals and conservatives have made abortion a litmus test of genuine commitment. As Jean Bethke Elshtain has noted: "Dealing with abortion . . . cannot be compared to building a great interstate highway system or desegregating the schools."

Any reader who takes the trouble to check the cited page in Elshtain's *Democracy on Trial* will quickly realize that she has no intention whatsoever of suggesting that building a great interstate highway might be a more important domestic concern than abortion. To the contrary, Elshtain is arguing almost the exact opposite of Carter's claim. She contends that judicial fiat on abortion made impossible the widespread public debate we should have had, thereby making a "politics of resentment" all but inevitable. She recognizes, of course—and this, I suppose, is why Carter quotes her—that such public debate might end in a compromise acceptable to true believers on neither side. But she is far from downplaying the importance of the question for our public life. We can sympathize with Carter's concern that our politics become more civil without forgetting that, at earlier periods of American history, our politics might in a sense have been more civil had there been no public debate over abolition or civil rights.

What is missing from *Integrity* is chiefly, I think, an appreciation of the role institutions play in shaping character. The chapters on marriage are to some extent an exception here, but even in them a greater emphasis on formation of character would have nudged Carter in the direction of controverted questions about "family values" that he pretty much avoids. It would also have required a much more complex discussion than he provides about the possibilities for legislating integrity. Integrity for him is explicitly a matter of the will. "Doing the right thing rather than the wrong is neither habit nor instinct. It is will." We should not ignore the will, but I suggest that doing the right thing—indeed, even the capacity to discern what ought to be done—is in large measure dependent upon habituation. Overlooking this, Carter may underestimate the educative force of law.

Because he ignores the character formation supplied by institutions, Carter also ignores the complexities created by the fact that our habits are formed in many different settings, which pull and push us in different

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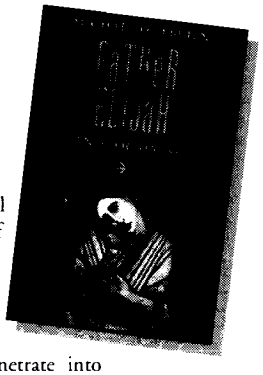

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directions. It is not so easy to achieve the integrity he seeks, and the divisions within the self often go deeper than he seems to imagine. To pay some heed to that fact will invite us, finally, to think of religion in ways that go beyond Carter's compass here. It may be, finally, that integrity—if it really includes wholeness of the self—must be bestowed, not willed.

What Have You Done for Us Lately?

THE RISE OF NEOCONSERVATISM: INTELLECTUALS AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS, 1945-1994. By JOHN EHRMAN. *Yale University Press. 241 pp. $27.50.*

***Reviewed by* A. J. Bacevich**

THIS SLENDER VOLUME delivers somewhat less than its imposing title promises. If it covers the ground assigned, it seldom probes beneath the surface. Useful as far as it goes, it doesn't go far enough. Still, *The Rise of Neoconservatism* merits attention if only because it serves as a cautionary tale. Although not by design, this book highlights the pitfalls inherent in writing intellectual history across the divide separating our new era—incompletely formed and imperfectly perceived—and the postwar era that shaped our collective consciousness but that now lies decisively in the past.

The tale of the neoconservatives makes for a worthy topic, one rich with fascinating personalities and laden with drama. In the aftermath of Vietnam, a band of mostly New York-based, largely Jewish, passionately anti-Communist, and thoroughly combative literary intellectuals abandon liberalism and the Democratic Party (both of which they had come to view as irredeemably corrupted) and throw their impressive energies into a vigorous campaign aimed at salvaging American foreign policy. They succeed and in the process contribute mightily to the rise of a new conservative coalition that achieves political dominance: this is a story to which scholars will no doubt be returning again and again. The definitive study eventually resulting from that scholarly enterprise will yield a plethora of insights about the role of the intellectual in American life, the impact of ideas and ideology on American politics, and the temper of the American intellectual milieu at the close of the postwar era.

THIS BOOK IS NOT that definitive treatment. It is at best a preliminary report, a concise primer for the novice, the student of American politics who upon dipping into the fetid backwash of the 1960s comes across agitated references to Irving Kristol, Norman Podhoretz, or the Committee on the Present Danger and wonders what all the fuss was about. In explaining the commotion stirred up by the "neocons," John Ehrman, a lecturer in history at George Washington University, hews to the fundamentals. He identifies the main players, outlines the themes of their frequently controversial writings, and provides a straightforward (if peculiarly bloodless) account of their rise to public prominence.

It is a workmanlike performance: well-researched, well-organized, and informative. Yet the result succeeds as description rather than analysis. Respectful of his dramatis personae—perhaps unduly so—the author does not challenge them. Indeed, the book's chief shortcoming lies in Mr. Ehrman's seeming reluctance to grapple with the neoconservative legacy, to engage *their* Cold War ideas from *our* post-Cold War vantage point.

In characterizing one particular group of neoconservatives, the author observes that "They took words very seriously, believing that they had real consequences." The remark is an apt one that applies to neocons generally. Indeed, this insistence upon taking words and ideas seriously is chief among the qualities that make writers like Podhoretz, Kristol, Midge Decter, Jeane Kirkpatrick, and Walter Laqueur—all of whom figure prominently in this account—so interesting and so formidable.

As faithful readers of *Commentary*—long the leading journal of neoconservatism—know, when neocons engage in intellectual combat, they play for keeps. The game is not for the squeamish or thin-skinned. At the top of their form, neoconservative writers fashion polemics like a military campaign, employing massive force directed at the point of greatest vulnerability. The aim is not to trade blows with the adversary tit-for-tat. It is to overwhelm him. The intended result is not an "exchange" but victory: complete, decisive, and with no prisoners taken.

Having made their reputation by exposing the errors, inconsistencies,

A. J. BACEVICH *is Executive Director of the Foreign Policy Institute at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C.*

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and inanities of their former compatriots on the left, neoconservatives expect to be held accountable for their own judgments and prescriptions: this too is the way that the game is played.

Thus, as today's sprawling, vibrant, and fractious political right struggles to define the principles that should guide American foreign policy into the next century, a critical analysis of neoconservative thought during some of the Cold War's darkest days would be both timely and beneficial. The point is not to second-guess. Rather, it is to determine whether there exists a discernible neoconservative angle of vision that remains relevant to the issues of the present day—issues that differ fundamentally from those that neocons addressed with such relentless ferocity and penetrating insight in the confused aftermath of the 1960s.

In short, with the Cold War won and threats to Israel's security (arguably) in decline, how much there is still there? Do the ideas espoused by neoconservatives comprise a distinctive variant of modern conservatism? (Ehrman gives the question only passing attention.) Or are the neocons simply a cluster of cranky intellectuals animated by a shared disgust with the excesses of the 1960s and a contempt for the timorousness of the 1970s but now soon to pass from the scene? (The author's effort to identify a successor generation is unpersuasive.) More to the point, on the eve of a new millennium, what do these apostates from the left—many of whom insist that labels notwithstanding they remain "true" liberals—bring to efforts to move the debate over American foreign policy beyond the stale dichotomy of globalism vs. isolationism?

Admirers of the neocons will argue that their accumulated writings have much to contribute to that debate. Yet to draw out that contribution requires not deference but a systematic effort to subject those writings to critical scrutiny. Only by evaluating neoconservative ideas—shaped by the ideological imperatives of the Cold War—in terms of the post-Cold War era's radically altered frame of reference can we adapt the neocon legacy to our own purposes.

Whistling Past Hades

The Death of Satan: How Americans Have Lost the Sense of Evil. By Andrew Delbanco. *Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 274 pp. $23.*

***Reviewed by* Walter Sundberg**

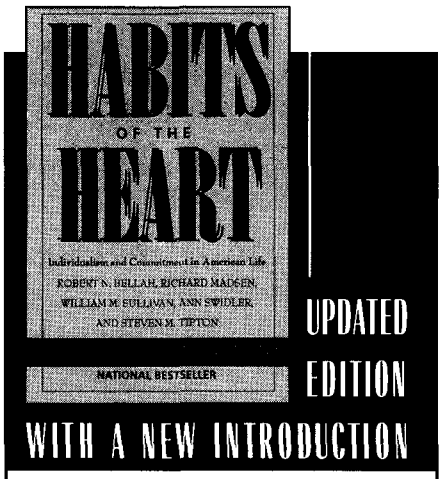
Andrew Delbanco, Professor of the Humanities at Columbia University, is a secular liberal with a very bad conscience. While he has not lost his faith in the secular creed, he is despondent over the heartless confidence with which it denies transcendence and deathly afraid of the cultural and social consequences of this denial. He is right to be worried.

A healthy, stable society needs to be rooted in a shared moral vision. In a democratic society, where self-government is the rule, this moral vision functions to shape individual character. Only individuals of good character can govern themselves responsibly. The conventional means for any society to obtain such a vision, and have that vision exercise broad influence, is through religious traditions. If religious traditions are under constant attack by literary elites and are impeded from functioning as agents of moral vision, there is nothing to replace them—at least nothing that can be effective on a broad scale.

We used to know this clearly as a nation. It was part of the common wisdom at our founding. "Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life," asked George Washington in his Farewell Address, "if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in the courts of justice? . . . Reason and experience forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."

Our predicament today is illustrated precisely in the place where this Founding Father tells us to look. The sense of religious obligation *has deserted* our courts of justice. The practice of American law is adrift

Walter Sundberg *is Professor of Church History at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota.*



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and everybody knows it. And this is but one instance of a general cultural malaise. Delbanco quotes Richard Rorty: "Once upon a time we felt a need to worship something which lay beyond the visible world . . . [and now we have arrived at] the point where we no longer worship *anything*, where we treat *nothing* as a quasi-divinity, where we treat *everything*—our language, our conscience, our community—as a product of time and chance." This deconstructed world is the world that we inhabit.

The story of American literature and especially contemporary literary and philosophical theory shows how this world came into being. Ours is a "culture of irony," grounded in a "discourse of disbelief." Delbanco believes as a secular, cosmopolitan academic that there is no going home again to the comforts of a shared moral universe grounded in transcendence. But he also knows, and this is the subject of his provocative book, that the costs of this predicament are frightening: "When this theory or idea gets loose from the books, it becomes another matter altogether. For it is incompatible with personal responsibility. In this sense, the most articulate ironists of the last few years have been not professors but killers like the Menendez brothers."

The conjunction between Rorty and the Menendez brothers is rhetorically devastating. It shows that Delbanco's method has enormous potential for persuasion. We can learn a lot, says Delbanco, by focusing on the dark side of human affairs. He tells the story of religious and moral degeneration by concentrating his attention not on the forfeiture of God in American culture, but on the forfeiture of Satan. The assumption here is that while many do not believe that the existence of God is intellectually viable, they cannot possibly deny the fact of evil. Given this fact, does not the lack of a vigorous moral sense of evil make us nervous? To gaze upon the face of evil may be the only means we have to undercut the philosophy of relativism that grips the knowledge class and makes the common man indifferent.

This approach is not without precedent. G. K. Chesterton and Reinhold Niebuhr remarked that original sin is the one Christian doctrine that is empirically verifiable. The two great epic poems of modern Western culture, *Paradise Lost* and *Faust*, have the devil as their most arresting character. There are even clues on a more mundane level. Notice, for example, how tourists yap and carry on when visiting the great cathedrals, but fall silent at the gates of Auschwitz or Dachau.

Delbanco is attuned to these things because his family carries its own burdens. He is the son of German-born Jews who fled Hitler. "My mother told me that Joseph

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Our religion is essentially contemplative. It tells us that a man is risen from the dead and living forever with the power of God to transform human life. What is required of us is to pay attention to the spiritual, invisible, but real presence of this God-made-man, to focus on Him and accept His loving, healing, renewing activity in our lives. This spiritual attention requires a certain letting go of preoccupation with earthly things, and allowing space for His action, a silence, a self-denial, self-emptying, a withdrawal, in which all our powers are submitted to His direction. Energized by His life we return to the world to attempt to love and serve others as we are loved.

A monastery is a place set aside for this attentiveness to God with a view to submission to His transforming action in drawing the individual and the world to Himself. It is a place for alertness to God, friendship with Him, healing for the world. The life of a monk, the witness of a monastery are needed as much as ever in our world where noise, materialism, and the frenetic, frantic pursuit of pleasure are obscuring the call to the simplicity which leads to peace, the call of an infinite person who seeks to dwell with us. It is a happy vocation because in tune with fundamental realities: God, life, joy, the spirit, truth; and it ennobles the lives of others by handing on to them and modeling for them the Good News that offers something to live for, "reasons for living and hoping," a happy, meaningful life.

For the laying open of the self to the purifying action of Christ and His Spirit is the introduction into the community of divine and human persons that every human heart was made for and craves. In this way contemplation builds community. Even the sacrifices that the life entails, the crucifixion of self-indulgent desires that Christ and St. Paul speak of, are surrounded by the promise of joy and made endurable by a growing share in the life of Christ.

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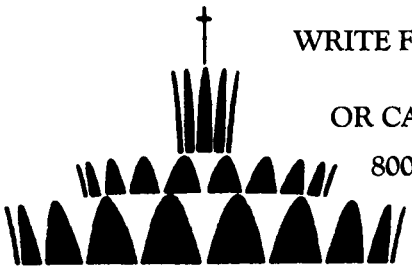

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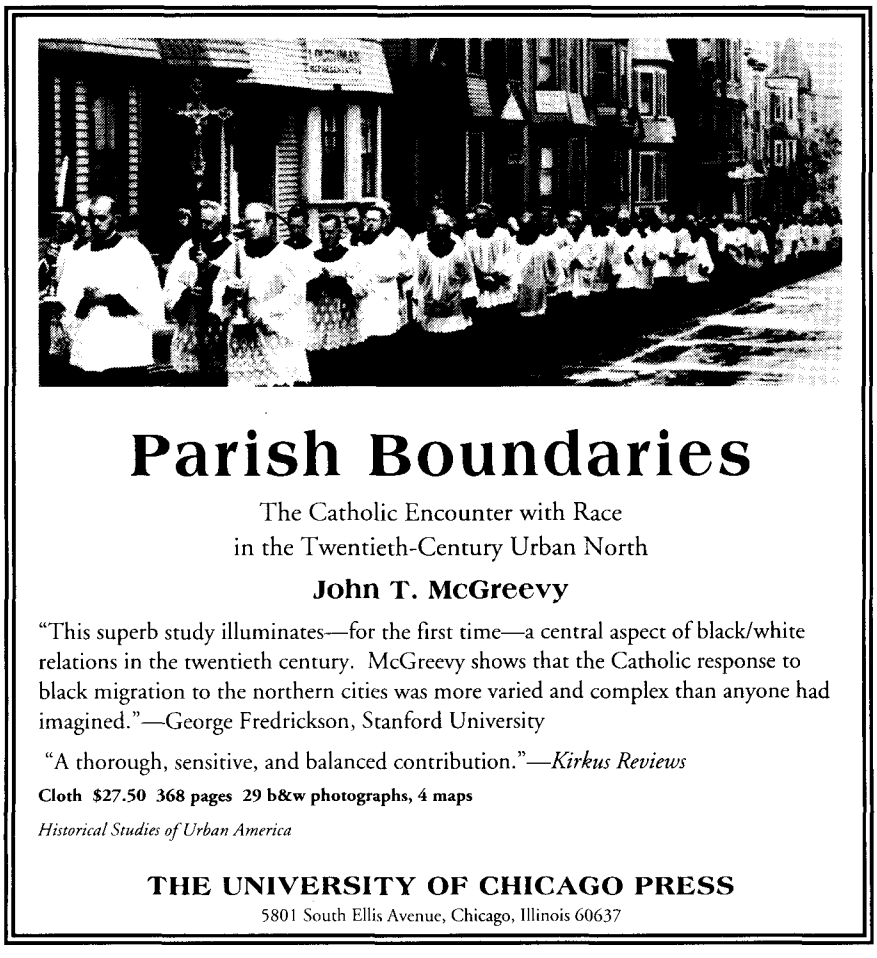
Goebbels had been the devil incarnate," he writes. His wife's mother, as a young girl in Hong Kong, cut her hair short and hid indoors to escape Japanese soldiers. The families of Delbanco and his wife found refuge in this country. But other families have not. Delbanco sprinkles his book with hair-raising anecdotes from the experience of black people forced to make a home in America. The point here is that if we pay attention, we can feel the awful presence of evil in our midst. As the examples of evil accumulate, they take on a numinous quality, especially when they are presented by a good writer who helps us to see them in all of their disturbing power. Evil is in, with, and under human experience; it is an anti-sacrament that, in its twisted way, witnesses to the Holy. It does this by making us hunger for an ordered, moral universe. We want moral order because we desperately want to interpret human experience, including the experience of suffering, as meaningful.

THERE IS A Puritan divine hiding inside the secular Delbanco, struggling to get out. This is apparent in Delbanco's sympathy for Jonathan Edwards and Abraham Lincoln, which is nothing less than theological. It also appears in his affection and deep respect for the Calvinist ethos of Hawthorne and Melville. Delbanco admires the fact that when the *Titanic* sank in April 1912, the press was educated enough in a common culture of transcendence to be able to interpret the event in terms of Scripture: "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." To understand this event fully is to know that it symbolizes the sunken glory of human endeavor. Delbanco finds it laudable that there was "such a time when a person's fate could be understood as having a moral appropriateness. . . . Suffering and fault [were] imagined to stand in some sort of stable relation [and] one [might] discern at least a hint of order, of what some theologians used to call 'excellency,' in the fact of human pain."

The mode of discourse here is nostalgic. But if Delbanco is nostalgic, at least he is knowledgeable about the gravity that religious speech used to bear. It is shocking to realize what "excellency" once meant in theology, what enormous weight it carried. Try to find a theologian or pastor today who inhabits this exalted realm of ideas. Perhaps it takes an outsider to prove anew the power of traditional religious speech.

There are dissatisfactions in the book. The argument occasionally meanders. A number of quotations are overlong. There is a vicious swipe at Newt Gingrich that is unwarranted and obviously partisan. More serious is the author's treatment of Augustine. In recounting the doctrinal history of Satan in Christian theology, Delbanco rightly insists upon Augustine as a central figure. He mistakenly claims, however, that, as Augustine's faith grew, "the devil simply falls out of his cosmology." While Augustine taught a doctrine of evil as privation, he also is the church father most responsible for teaching Satan as the fallen angel who rebels against God and personifies the sin of pride as an active, spiritual power. Augustine never reconciled these two directions in his thinking. On the one hand, he asserted evil as nothingness, while on the other, he painted an imaginative portrait of the angelic Adversary that would later inspire Milton to create the greatest Promethean protagonist of English poetry. If Delbanco wants to traffic in ideas about the demonic, he has to be more willing to accept their inherent contradictions and confusions. The devil lives by illogic and paradox.

I am most bothered by the liberal residue that clings to Delbanco's argument. Liberalism has suffered mighty blows in recent years. But if



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it holds to any article of its shopworn creed, it is the belief that it rides the wave of the future. Delbanco shares this faith in futurology. Thus, while he does not like the loss of transcendence, he thinks we have to learn to live with it. His pronouncements have a world-weary confidence: Modernity "has doomed us to see the world through metaphors that cannot be ratified by any appeal to transcendence"; this loss of God is "an irreversible fact of modern history." Delbanco should have learned from nineteenth-century liberal historiography that to claim "irreversible fact" is to stand on the shakiest of ground. We live in a time when the aged Ted Kennedy has become irrelevant while the aged Billy Graham makes the cover of *Time*; when the feminist Naomi Wolf talks about the danger of abortion to women's "souls"; when the churches that Stalin destroyed are being rebuilt. Long after philosophy students stop reading Richard Rorty, they will pore over the pages of Augustine.

I do not want these criticisms to take away from *The Death of Satan*. This is a book to read and discuss—perhaps beginning with students at the privileged universities that our Puritan forbears founded long ago.

BRIEFLY NOTED

The Life Of Adam Smith. By Ian Simpson Ross. *Oxford/Clarendon Press. 495 pp. $35.*

Professor Ross, who teaches English at the University of British Columbia, briefly mentions in his introduction various fashionable literary methodologies, but he does so only to reject them as inappropriate to the art of biography. That art involves the careful attention to detail of the historian, coupled with an imaginative sympathy—an attempt to grasp and portray the *self* of the biographical subject—not easy to achieve under the best of circumstances, and quite difficult when the subject is, like Smith, a philosopher who lived primarily through his writings. That Ross manages to reconstruct, often from mere fragments, a living personality is indicative of considerable skill in the biographical art. The Smith that emerges is brilliant but absent-minded, devoted to his mother, and subject to hypochondria. He is also a thoroughly decent man. While not a philosopher, Ross manages for the most part to navigate the complex intellectual currents forming the Scottish Enlightenment, the movement of which Adam Smith is perhaps the greatest representative. The Scottish Enlightenment shared little of the rationalist optimism of the continental Enlightenment, was far more sympathetic to religion, and remained keenly aware of the persistence of evil and fallibility in human affairs. Smith was not just the apostle of the market society, but a sophisticated moral thinker. Ross includes painstakingly researched chapters on the genesis on Smith's two greatest works—*The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *The Wealth of Nations*—and shows how they must be read together. Smith embraced the potential of markets to improve the material condition of men and women only on the condition that "the laws of justice" were not violated. He thus exhibited an attentiveness to the moral preconditions of the free society—the "system of natural liberty"—that most contemporary libertarians, many of whom drink at his trough, do not share.

— Brian C. Anderson

The Sources of Christian Ethics. By Servais Pinckaers, O.P. Translated by Sister Mary Thomas Noble, O.P. *Catholic University Press. 489 pp. $44.95 cloth, $24.95 paper.*

In the Foreword to this English edition of Father Pinckaers' work, Romanus Cessario, O.P., notes that the connaturality between man and man's true good is one of the major themes of Father Pinckaers' book. Connaturality is a technical way of putting the presumption that without the virtuous habits, we endanger our relationship to God. According-

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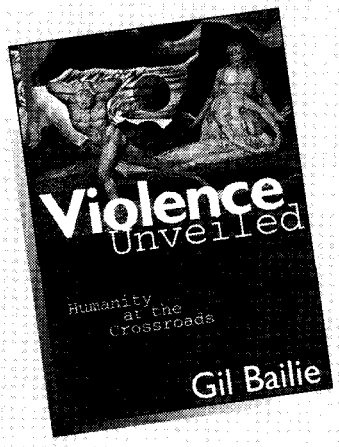

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ly, Pinckaers' wonderful book is characterized by a return to the centrality of the virtues for how one thinks about the moral life. This emphasis enables Pinckaers to present Aquinas' ethics in all their theological richness, helping us to see that Aquinas' ethics is nothing less than an ongoing commentary on Scripture and in particular the significance of the Beatitudes. Pinckaers offers an alternative to the unhappy and unfruitful debates about proportionalism in contemporary Roman Catholic moral theology. Here we have Roman Catholic moral theology done in a manner that makes the Scriptures and the Fathers integral to that task. Father Pinckaers reminds us that happiness, not law, is the center of the Christian life, and he provides an illuminating history of how this insight was lost in the development of Catholic moral theology. Father Pinckaers writes with a generous spirit and deep wisdom. His book, unfortunately, could be lost amid the current polemics exactly because it is not polemical. Yet it has an edge that hopefully will attract many readers. The author writes: "Let me say that we have no need to fear presenting the Sermon on the Mount to nonbelievers, on the pretext that only a natural ethic is appropriate for them. Experience shows, and the reading of commentaries confirms it: the Sermon touches non-Christians more deeply and has far greater appeal than any moral theory based on natural law in the name of reason. It is as if the Sermon strikes a human chord more 'natural' and universal than reason by itself can ever do."

— *Stanley Hauerwas*

PRESENCE AND THOUGHT: AN ESSAY ON THE RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY OF GREGORY OF NYSSA. By HANS URS VON BALTHASAR. Translated by Mark Sebanc. *Ignatius Press. $17.99.*

The first move for any Christian thinker dealing with the issues of his own time, writes von Balthasar, "is to return once more to the past." In the 1930s von Balthasar began a long-range project to examine the thought of the three major Greek Christian thinkers from antiquity, Origen of Alexandria (third century), Gregory of Nyssa (fourth century), and Maximus the Confessor (seventh century). When the present volume, first published in French in 1942 and now beautifully translated by Mark Sebanc, appeared, Gregory was seldom read even in learned circles. Today, because of this book and the writings of Jean Danielou, Gregory is avidly studied as a spiritual thinker and theologian, in von Balthasar's phrase, for the "poetry of the ideas themselves." Gregory's *Life of Moses* has become a minor classic. The present volume is a serious historical study of Gregory against the backdrop of Platonic thought, but von Balthasar, characteristically, writes with an eye as much on the twentieth century as on the fourth and the book can be read as an illuminating chapter in the development of von Balthasar's own thought.

— *Robert L. Wilken*

JEWS AND BLACKS: LET THE HEALING BEGIN. By MICHAEL LERNER and CORNEL WEST. *Putnam. 276 pp. $24.95.*

In recent years, much attention has been focused on the collapse of the Black-Jewish alliance, once the cornerstone of liberal politics in America. In their new book, Michael Lerner, editor of the left-liberal Jewish magazine *Tikkun*, and Cornel West, a professor of religion and Afro-American studies at Harvard and one of the country's preeminent liberal black intellectuals, address a variety of issues, including Zionism, affirmative action, and the anti-Semitic diatribes of Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan. In this volume, which consists of transcripts from their tape-recorded conversations over several years and which was intended to create a basis for renewed dialogue and mutual understanding between Jews and blacks, they are unable to resolve their own fundamental and profound disagreements, particularly on the issue of black anti-Semitism. Especially disturbing is their emotional dialogue about Farrakhan's virulent anti-Semitism, which West refuses to repudiate or unequivocally condemn, despite Lerner's earnest pleading with him to do so. Their conversation fails completely to assuage the fears of an increasing number of Jews that Farrakhan's popularity within the black community bears testimony to a widespread and deep-rooted black anti-Semitism. West's stubborn refusal to repudiate Farrakhan should be a source of sobering concern to liberal Jewish intellectuals, such as Lerner, who all-too-naively believe that the profound rifts dividing blacks and Jews can easily be healed.

— *David G. Dalin*

MORAL CHOICES: AN INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS. By SCOTT B. RAE. *Zondervan. 253 pp. $17.99.*

This book, written from an evangelical perspective, is a current and comprehensive survey of moral theories and controversies. Intended for undergraduates, it begins with a digest of classical ethical theories and then moves on to a series of brief intellectual snapshots of major figures in the history of ethics. The concise theoretical coverage concludes with a unique seven-step decision model designed to help students arbitrate case studies and moral quandaries. Seven issue-themed chapters follow, the two most notable of which focus on reproductive technologies and euthanasia. The look at reproductive technologies is especially helpful in that it systematically unravels the sometimes bewildering complexities of operations and treatments available to individuals and couples—of every sort—seeking children. To the author's credit he does not shy away from offering strong words of caution concerning the manipulation of human procreation. The chapter on euthanasia is fresh, and informed by the author's clinical experience as a hospital ethics committee member. The distinction between active and passive euthanasia is emphatically drawn, and clear priority throughout is given to the sanctity of life. Al-

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— *Brad Stetson*

MORE THAN ONE WAY? FOUR VIEWS ON SALVATION IN A PLURALISTIC WORLD. Edited by DENNIS L. OKHOLM and TIMOTHY R. PHILLIPS. *Zondervan. 283 pp. $16.99 paper.*

Analysis of truth-claims in relation to religious diversity is clearly a growth industry in religious book publishing. As the plausibility of pure relativism in religion continues to strain credulity, writers from a range of Christian traditions are limning aspects of "the scandal of particularity" in increasingly creative ways. *More Than One Way?* furthers this project. This new contribution in Zondervan's "four views" series is the first forum strictly devoted to evangelical dialogue with the most influential theorist of relativism in religious belief, John Hick. His theory of "religious pluralism," in which a propertyless, unknown Ultimate—"the Real"—lies behind each of the great religious traditions has wielded a strong influence, one far out of proportion to its meager cogency. In this volume Hick interacts with Clark Pinnock (representing evangelical inclusivism), Alister McGrath (representing one species of evangelical particularism), and R. Douglas Geivett and W. Gary Phillips (representing an "evidentialist" evangelical particularism). The dialogue format of the book, in which each contributor presents his case, followed by responses from each of the other participants, and then a rebuttal from the first author, is helpful in that it directly leads to discussion of the most contentious questions. However, one cannot help but get the impression that the participants feel rushed. Their frequent references to space constraints give the exchanges a kind of shorthand or "Cliff Notes" feeling, as though one is reading the digest of a much larger debate.

— *BS*

A LIE AND A LIBEL: THE HISTORY OF THE PROTOCOLS OF THE ELDERS OF ZION. By BINJAMIN W. SEGEL. Translated and edited by Richard S. Levy. *University of Nebraska Press. 148 pp. $22.50.*

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion is the most famous anti-Semitic document of modern times. A forgery composed in the late 1890s by the secret police of tsarist Russia, *The Protocols* purported to be the minutes of a meeting among the leaders of a diabolical international Jewish conspiracy. By having fellow Jews gain positions of influence within every country, the fictitious conspirators plotted to manipulate national economies and popular passions, cause depressions and revolutions and wars, make and break diplomatic alliances, start wars and stop them at a moment's notice—whatever helped to consolidate the Jews' global power and reduce other peoples to abject poverty, servitude, and slavery. Binjamin Segel, a German Jew writing in the 1920s, made a withering critique of the document, drawing out all of its absurdity, mendaciousness, and pathetic clumsiness. Despite its implausibility on even the most superficial level, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* has been translated into scores of languages, and it continues to have wide circulation throughout the world, courtesy of various neofascist, anti-Semitic, and racist organizations. Many modern anti-Jewish commonplaces have their origin in *The Protocols*. Its influence among the credulous has not been much affected by its inaccuracies or its paucity of relevant names, places, dates, and evidence. Indeed, *The Protocols* has been reissued by anti-Semitic groups over the years with slight variations of locale and plot to fit the popular resentments and fears of the moment. The translator, Richard Levy, provides a very useful introductory essay that broadens the historical context of Segel's critique. One only wishes that this little volume could have been expanded to include a copy of the actual document itself.

WHEN GOD BECOMES GODDESS: THE TRANSFORMATION OF AMERICAN RELIGION. By RICHARD GRIGG. *Continuum. 149 pp. $22.95.*

Though the actual text runs barely a hundred pages, readers of this little book will find themselves compelled to honor its author: the writing of even a hundred pages this thoroughly silly requires no ordinary talent. Mr. Grigg's thesis seems to be that if everyone were to admit that God is dead, then there might be a use for the "feminist enactment theology" that has been making the rounds in the more breathless of theological journals the last few years. Of course, as the author himself admits, the vast majority of Americans don't think that God is dead, but they ought to, because—well, because if they did then "feminist enactment theology" could save them from the bad consequences of thinking God is dead. We should use, in other words, 1960s "Death of God" theology to force all Americans to disbelieve so that we can use 1990s Goddess theology to combat—what else?—American disbelief. Besides, Mr. Grigg argues, traditional Jewish and Christian God-talk is all translatable into new Goddess-talk. Readers may wonder why anyone would bother, since translators will necessarily arrive only at the inevitable "Death of Goddess" that translates the "Death of God." But Mr. Grigg's fears on this score seem quieted by the assurance that the effort of translation will at least give employment to a generation or two of theologians, and in the meantime there's so much fun in bashing traditionalists with three decades worth of theological fads. A sad little exercise by an author with time to kill.

THINK A SECOND TIME. By DENNIS PRAGER. *Regan Books/HarperCollins. 253 pp. $24.*

CAN FAMILIES SURVIVE IN PAGAN AMERICA? By SAMUEL H. DRESNER. *Huntington House. 332 pp. $15.99 paper.*

Two conservative critiques of modern society by religious Jews. Dennis

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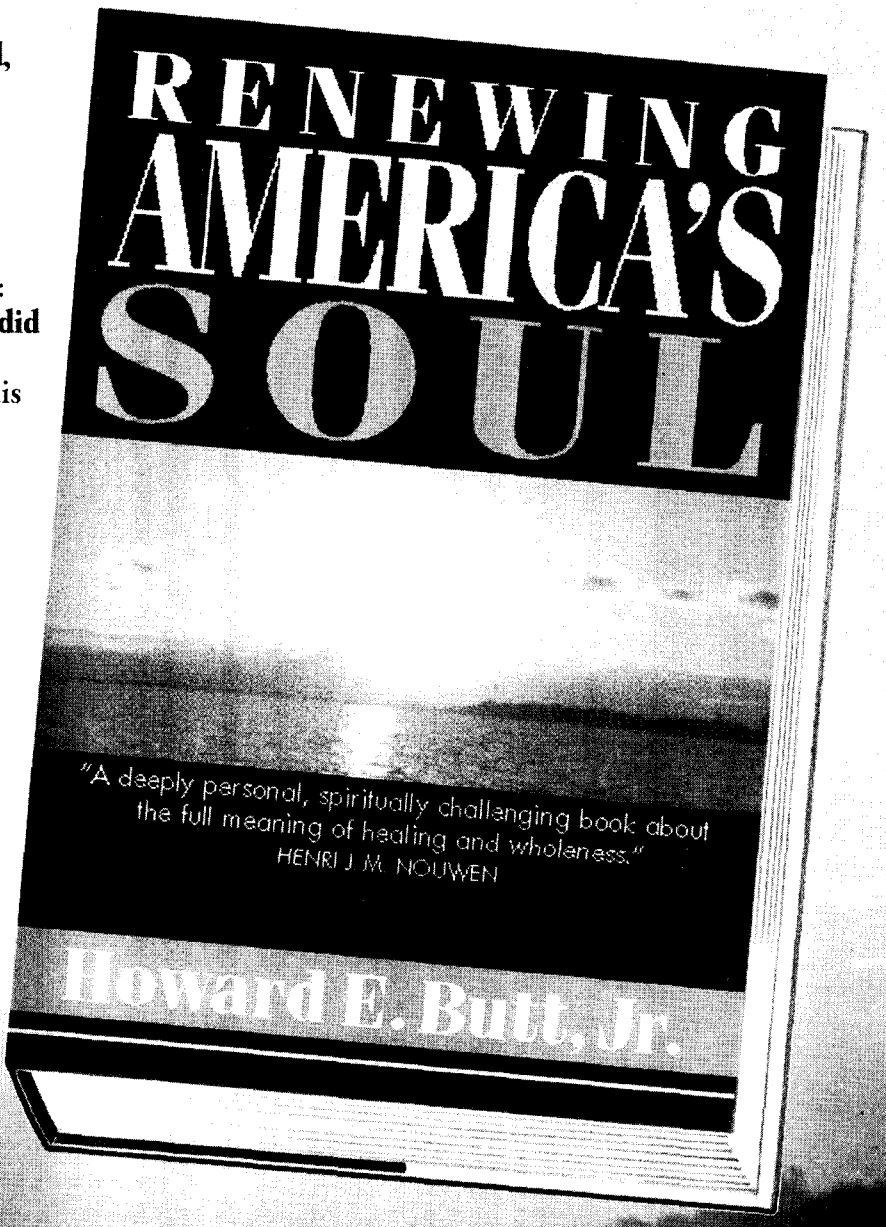
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Prager—the Los Angeles-based author, journalist, and syndicated radio talk-show host—is a traditional Jew from an Orthodox background who has long advocated "ethical monotheism" as the essential foundation of any good society. *Think a Second Time* is a collection of some of his most incisive commentaries on such subjects as human nature, race relations, feminism, the decline of liberalism, school choice, the moral development of children, prayer, and life after death. Prager is something of a maverick conservative who isn't afraid to occasionally move to his left a bit (see his discussion of soft-core pornography, for instance), which is part of what makes him so interesting and engaging. Prager's essay "A Jew's Thoughts on Christmas" is a little masterpiece that the leaders of Jewish secular organizations would do well to take to heart. The collection of essays by Samuel Dresner, long a distinguished faculty member at New York's Jewish Theological Seminary (Conservative movement), is a nice complement to the Prager volume; it covers some similar ground, but gives more attention to fewer subjects, and with more scholarly depth (though it is always accessible). Readers seeking solid overviews on "Homosexuality and the Order of Creation," "Goddess Feminism," and "The Return of Paganism," among other topics, will not be unrewarded. Both authors are broadly sympathetic to the efforts of conservative Christians to re-moralize America's public life.

THE CHURCH. By EDMUND P. CLOWNEY. *InterVarsity. 336 pp. $14.99 paper.*

It is frequently and rightly observed that evangelical Protestantism is very weak when it comes to the importance of the Church in New Testament Christianity. Clowney recognizes that weakness and in this book offers a very persuasive account of what it might mean for Protestants to become more reflective about what it means when they say they believe in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. This volume is part of the InterVarsity series "Contours of Christian Theology."

THE MAINLINE CHURCH'S FUNDING CRISIS. By RONALD E. VALLET and CHARLES E. ZECH. *Eerdmans. 167 pp. $16 paper.*

Do not be put off by the clumsy title. The spirited and convincing argument is that the mainline/oldline/sideline churches are suffering a crisis of faith, with severe consequences for, inter alia, funding of missions both domestic and foreign. The authors strongly hope that God is not finished with these churches and look for a response that will vindicate their hope.

RELIGION AND POLITICS IN AMERICA: FAITH, CULTURE, AND STRATEGIC CHOICES. By ROBERT BOOTH FOWLER and ALLEN D. HERTZKE. *Westview. 287 pp. $55 cloth, $18.95 paper.*

A text to be greatly welcomed by teachers of religion and government as a reliable guide to the cultural churnings that are changing our public life. A balanced treatment, said C. Wright Mills, is frequently the achievement of "a vague equilibrium between platitudes." In that sense of the term, this book is not balanced, but it does provide a fair and accurate account of frequently conflicting forces by two authors who manifestly respect both religion and the American political experiment.

DICTIONARY OF EVANGELICAL BIOGRAPHY, 1730-1860. Edited by DONALD M. LEWIS. *Blackwell. Two volumes, 1,259 pp. $195.*

The price will preclude purchase by all but institutional libraries, but this is a notable achievement that should be welcomed by scholars. Keep in mind that "evangelical" in this case is synonymous with Protestant, since until the turn of the century almost all non-Catholic and non-Orthodox Christians styled themselves evangelical. The volumes are a great delight for browsing and will no doubt be invaluable for the serious researcher.

A MAP OF TWENTIETH CENTURY THEOLOGY. Edited by CARL E. BRAATEN and ROBERT W. JENSON. *Fortress. 388 pp. $26 paper.*

An extremely useful anthology that will undoubtedly become a standard reference in classrooms, but should be welcomed also by laity looking for an introduction to contemporary theology. In the very nature of things, say the two Lutheran editors, the book is inordinately Protestant simply because "modern" theology was, until recently, almost completely a Protestant project. Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan are here, but the editors apologize (and appropriately so) for the absence of Hans Urs von Balthasar, whom they recognize as probably the greatest of Catholic theologians in this century. All of the main figures and schools of thought are provided with succinct and insightful introductions by the editors.

WOOD OF THE CRADLE, WOOD OF THE CROSS. By CARYLL HOUSELANDER. *Sophia Press (Manchester, NH 03108). 166 pp. $14.95.*

By the time she died in 1954, Houselander had become one of the most admired spiritual writers in the Christian world. *A Rocking-Horse Catholic*, the story of her childhood and youth, and *The Reed of God*, a reflection on the Virgin Mary, deserve to be called classics. Sophia Press renders a real service by bringing her books back into print, and for doing so in a very classy format. The present book is subtitled "the little way of the infant Jesus," and should be of interest to Christians of all communions.

MARRIED TO THE CHURCH. By RAYMOND HEDIN. *Indiana University Press. 260 pp. $29.95.*

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priests who "stick with it" despite a rigid Church that offends their superior sensibilities. Of the last group the author writes, "The desire to participate in larger changes is rooted deeply enough in them, in many of us who identify with the 1960s, that, in conjunction with their traditional need to belong or affiliate, they cannot find contentment in total divorce from an institution which resists change but still offers an area in which to seek it." At every point, in this view, the Church is subordinate to, instrumental to, what is thought to be required for personal fulfillment. The genre is familiar; fashionable talk about vulnerability and openness to change that is, in fact, redolent of a moral smugness disdainful of any truth that threatens the uncritically vaunted authenticity of the self. This is a desperately sad book. The author teaches American and Afro-American Studies at Indiana University.

Eclipse

You have taken away my names.
Last night the loon was crying for you, one call
after another, a ripple of clearest water
virgin and pure, cut off from the source, a mouth
of tumbled grief.
The wind was looking for you. Searching
the trees, scaling the tall pines and knotted
salt oaks, the Spanish moss whispering, asking
the roots
where you have gone.
And long after midnight,
when what was left of the sun's looking
glass showed its face, it hid its broken reflection
in the clouds, the low long banks of fog,
a scrap
of used paper, old parchment, ashamed to be seen.
How can I come to you, without a syllable
of my own? Only this begging
bowl,
poor battered cup of my heart where once given
to feeling
now emptiness steals, catching at each new
breath which, like the shore
air over these waters, these sands,
slips
and runs away.
A keel taking on water,
sail luffing and spilling the wind,
tiller awash in tide and wave
you have set me adrift
in the night where I float without compass anchor
or star.

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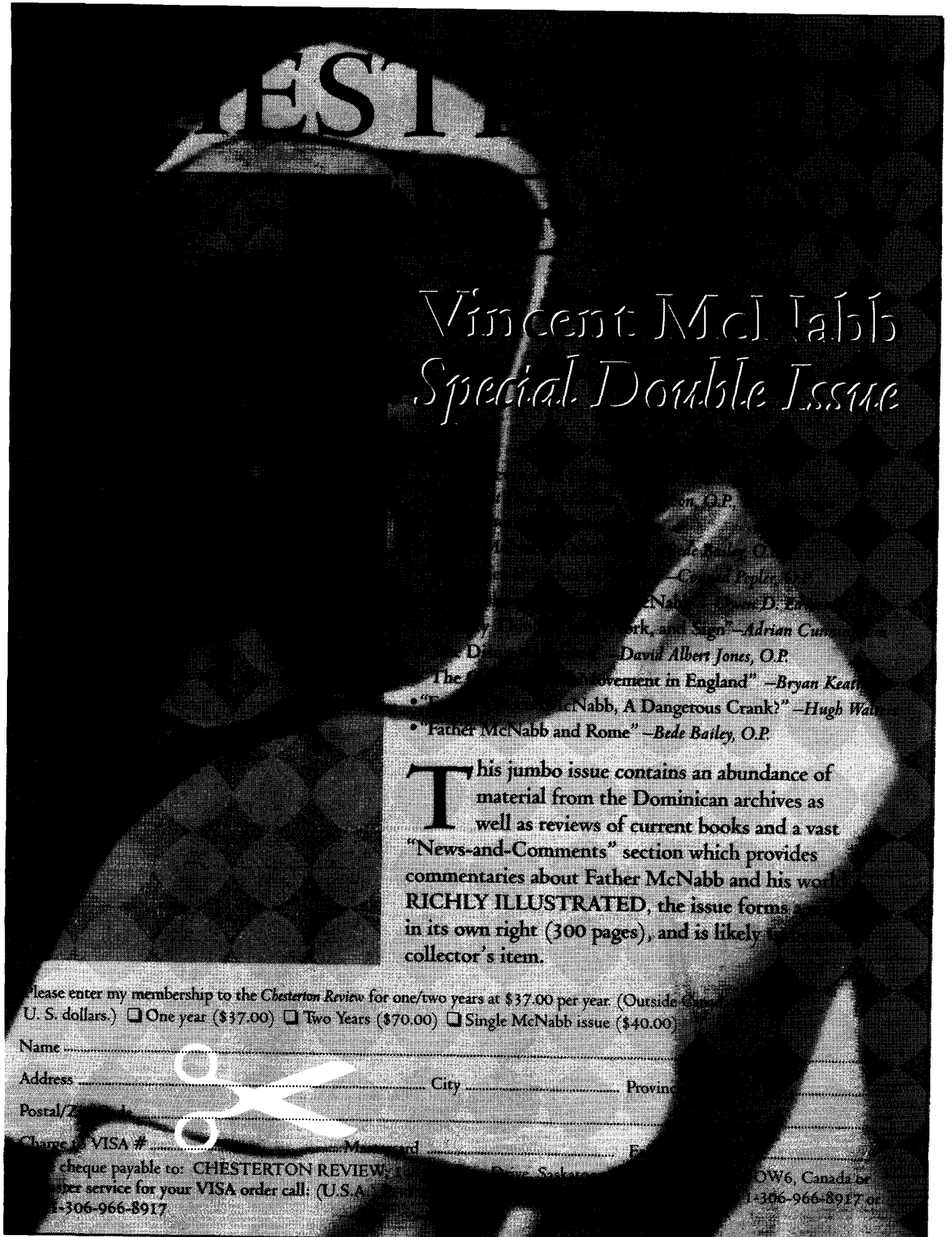
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Richard John Neuhaus

Against Christian Politics

An election year does strange things to people. For instance, Father John Kavanaugh's helpful homiletical reflections in *America* are usually about the scriptural text for the Sunday. But he, too, succumbs to the quadrennial political itches when confronted by the Sermon on the Mount, and he offers to his preacher readers a little tract on "Christian Faith and Politics." Among the homiletical inspirations: "Imagine the irony of a Christian political movement that along with public prayer trumpets the priorities of military security, tax cuts for the well-to-do, and capital punishment." A bit uneasy about the hint of partisanship in that political swipe, he writes, "This is not a put-down of any particular political party, even though, at first sight, it may seem so." At first sight and at as many other sights as you may care to give it.

"A Representative [Henry] Hyde," Fr. Kavanaugh writes, "is very Christian in his defense of unborn babies, but I wonder what he thinks of capital punishment, capital gains, and military adventures." I cannot imagine that Hyde or any other sensible person is in favor of military "adventures," but I would not be surprised if he views capital punishment as a sometimes regrettably necessary means to protect society, and thinks capital gains taxes drag down the economy, thereby hurting everybody, especially the poor. Those positions are perfectly permissible in Catholic moral teaching. Support for killing unborn babies is not.

Protecting his nonpartisan credentials, Fr. Kavanaugh notes that Senator Ted Kennedy is "a great defender of women and the poor" but he criticizes Kennedy's support for abortion. The conclusion is inescapable: the Republican Hydes and Democrat Kennedys are more or less morally equivalent, except that the Hydes take a non-Christian position on a lot of things while the Kennedys fall short on only one. Never mind that Catholic teaching solemnly declares abortion to be an "unspeakable crime," while the points on which Fr. Kavanaugh disagrees with the Hydes are matters of prudential judgment on which people of equal Christian commitment might legitimately disagree.

If we take the Sermon on the Mount seriously, says Fr. Kavanaugh, we must all admit "how readily we compromise the revolutionary message of Jesus." Who would dare to deny it? But then he leaves us with this edifying thought: "Upon that admission, we might then discover a Christian politics that illumines the world far more brilliantly than the dim ideologies we guide our lives by." Admittedly, some ideologies are dimmer than others, but a "Christian politics"?

One is reminded of Fr. Kavanaugh's fellow Jesuit, the late Fr. John Courtney Murray. Asked by a politician how he could base his political philosophy on the Sermon on the Mount, Fr. Murray incredulously responded, "What on earth makes you think that a Catholic political philosophy is based on the Sermon on the Mount?" He explained for the thousandth time that a political philosophy has to do with the virtue of justice as discerned by reason and directed by the virtue of prudence. Similarly, the great Protestant teacher Reinhold Niebuhr devoted his life to warning against the dangerous sentimentality of a "Christian politics." Love compels Christians to seek justice also through politics, Niebuhr insisted, but we must never equate our penultimate judgments about what might serve justice with the ultimate truth that impels us to seek and serve justice in the first place. In sum, we must never declare our politics to be "Christian politics," thereby implicitly excommunicating those Christians who disagree with us.

We Have Been Here Before

I would not pick on Fr. Kavanaugh, who, as I say, usually does not ride his political hobby horse in public. But his mindset is representative of a widespread and growing phenomenon on both the

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left and the right—the religionizing of politics and politicizing of religion. In recent American history, it started on the left in the aftermath of the mainline churches' moral euphoria in having been so very right about the early civil rights movement of Martin Luther King, Jr. In the years that followed, that euphoria inflated the moral certitude of those churches, and their bureaucracies were soon pronouncing God's definite opinion on almost every question in public dispute.

That could not last very long, and it didn't. After a while the members of those churches turned a deaf ear to their leaders, and then began drifting away, leaving mainline Protestantism in a spiral of decline that has yet to hit bottom. Still on the left, something similar is happening in Catholicism as the bishops are inclined to generously loan their teaching authority to the church-and-society curia of the United States Catholic Conference. Analysts of the mainline declension of the last thirty years watch this Catholic development with an eerie sense of having been here before.

Of course the more publicly potent religionizing of politics is today on the right of the ideological spectrum. Conservative leaders regularly say that they are only doing what the religious left did for decades, indeed going all the way back to the Social Gospel movement at the turn of the century. They're right about that, and that's what should worry them. The conflation of Christian faith with a specific political agenda inevitably leads to the distortion of faith. The equally inevitable failure to achieve something worthy of being called "Christian politics" produces a crisis in which people will feel forced to choose between their politics and their faith. Devotion to "God and country" is a fine thing, but when the two are given equal standing "country" will always fall far short of what people hope for and they will then find themselves faced with the prospect of "God *or* country."

For organizations such as the unhappily named Christian Coalition, that prospect may not be far off. How many electoral setbacks will it take to undermine the relentless triumphalism necessary to sustaining such a political insurgency? When the disillusioned despair of achieving a Christian politics in a Christian America, "God and country" might very quickly become "God or country." Most will choose for God, no doubt, but we should not be surprised if there are others for whom the "Christian" in the Christian Coalition is subservient to the political goals of the enterprise. The more seriously Christian, on the other hand, may think it necessary to choose for God against further political engagement. The result could be a return to the political passivity that marked evangelical and fundamentalist Christianity during most of this century. Not inconceivably, profound disillusionment could also produce a much more radicalized "Christian politics" on the right, a politics aimed at dismantling what is believed to be an incorrigibly evil constitutional order.

The last possibility is more than hinted at in movements that go by names such as Christian Reconstructionism and Dominion Theology. Such movements, with their assertion that America must be refounded on the basis of "Bible law," claim relatively few adherents today, but they are waiting in the wings, alert to their opportunity when enough Christians decide that it is not possible "to work within the system." Once again, there is an eerie sense of having been here before. Except the last time, in the 1960s, these questions preoccupied a left that thought itself to be in revolutionary ascendancy.

A Different Victory

Do not misunderstand. I sympathize with most of the stated positions of the Christian Coalition. That is not the question. The question is the conflation of Christian faith and political agenda. I have even spoken at the annual "Road to Victory" conference of the Coalition. I pleaded that, while there may be welcome achievements from time to time, Christians are called to walk not the road to political victory but the way of the cross. The speech met with a great ovation, maybe because it's the kind of thing Christians are expected to say, but I have very limited confidence that most of those who cheered understood what I was trying to say. Afterward, one participant, on the edge of tears, said he felt betrayed. It was my writings, he said, that had led him to become politically engaged, and now I was telling him that he had made a mistake. That is not the point. That is not the point at all.

Psalm 146 warns, "Put not your trust in princes." Even when they are your princes and you think you put them on their little thrones. Especially when they are your princes, because that is when the temptation arises to invest your soul and your highest allegiance in their rule. No politics can liberate us from the limits of a fallen creation. We can probe and press at the limits, but the politics for which we were made, the politics that is the right ordering of all things, the politics of the Sermon on the Mount, will, short of the Kingdom, always elude us. Liberation theology—whether of the Marxist or the Reconstructionist variety—is idolatry.

Christian political engagement is an endlessly difficult subject. Our Lord said to render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's, but he did not accommodate us by spelling out the details. Over two thousand years, Christians have again and again thought they got the mix just right, only to have it blow up in their faces—and, not so incidentally, in the faces of others. We're always having to go back to the drawing board, which is to say, to first things. Even when, especially when, we are most intensely

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engaged in the battle, first things must be kept first in mind. It is not easy but it is imperative. It profits us nothing if we win all the political battles while losing our own souls.

Alien Citizens

A very long time ago, when Christians were a persecuted minority of maybe fifty thousand in the great empire of Rome, an anonymous writer explained to a pagan named Diognetus the way it is with this peculiar people. Until Our Lord returns in glory, Christians do well to embrace the second century "Letter to Diognetus" as their vade mecum:

"For Christians cannot be distinguished from the rest of the human race by country or language or customs. They do not live in cities of their own; they do not use a peculiar form of speech; they do not follow an eccentric manner of life. This doctrine of theirs has not been discovered by the ingenuity or deep thought of inquisitive men, nor do they put forward a merely human teaching, as some people do. Yet, although they live in Greek and barbarian cities alike, as each man's lot has been cast, and follow the customs of the country in clothing and food and other matters of daily living, at the same time they give proof of the remarkable and admittedly extraordinary constitution of their own commonwealth. They live in their own countries, but only as aliens. They have a share in everything as citizens, and endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign land is their fatherland, and yet for them every fatherland is a foreign land. They marry, like everyone else, and they beget children, but they do not cast out their offspring. They share their board with each other, but not their marriage bed. It is true that they are 'in the flesh,' but they do not live 'according to the flesh.' They busy themselves on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven."

It is an awkward posture, being an alien citizen. It poses irresolvable problems for both "God and country" and "God or country." Christians critically affirm their responsibility for the politics of the earthly city, knowing all the while that their true polis is the City of God. Loyalty to the earthly city is joined to an allegiance that others who do not share that allegiance cannot help but view as subversive. It is as with Thomas More on the scaffold, "I die the king's good servant, but God's first." And, had Henry only known it, Thomas was the king's better servant because he served God first. Like so many others over the centuries, Henry had a "Christian politics" that demanded a totality of allegiance that no alien citizen could render him.

Where We Are Left

Christians are commanded to love their neighbors, and politics is one way—by no means the most important way—of doing that. In a democracy, everybody is asked to accept a measure of political responsibility, and most do. For some it is their life's work, as in "vocation." Like everything worth doing, it is worth doing well. And, for those who are called to do it, even when they frequently fail, it is also worth doing poorly. Christians engaged in politics, we may hope, will bring to the task the gifts of personal integrity and devotion to the common good. But that does not make their engagement "Christian politics." It is still just politics. A Christian engineer who builds a really good bridge has not built a "Christian bridge." The merit of the project depends upon qualities pertinent to the "bridgeness" of the thing, although we may believe that those qualities are well served by the Christian conviction and integrity of the builder.

So where does this leave us with the Sermon on the Mount? Deeply troubled, for sure. It leaves us, against our sinful inclination, attending to a "preferential option" for the poor and the sorrowful, the meek and the persecuted. Attending to them not by politics chiefly but by politics also. That sermon depicts a way of living that Niebuhr variously called an "impossible possibility" and "possible impossibility," with the one never being entirely overcome by the other. Yet the never is not forever, for, above all, it leaves us alien citizens with an insatiable longing for that other polis He told us about, when all those around the throne and the angels numbering myriads of myriads declare with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

And then, around the throne of the Lamb, we will have reason to hope that all our efforts, including our political efforts, did not get in the way of, and maybe even anticipated in some small part, that right ordering of all things that is the only politics deserving of the name Christian. Until then, talk about "Christian politics"—whether of the left or of the right or of ideologies as yet unimagined—is but a refusal to wait for the Kingdom. It is the delusion that we Christians are called to be or can be, in our exile from the heavenly polis, something other than the poor in spirit, the sorrowing, the meek, the hungry, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the persecuted—to be, in sum, something other than those whom the Sermon on the Mount calls blessed.

FT

THE UNEASY GHOST OF KARL MARX

It's easy to make fun of academics who haven't heard the news that Marx is dead. Perhaps too easy,

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suggests Michael Ignatieff in his review of Frank E. Manuel's *A Requiem for Karl Marx* (Harvard University Press). In the last few years it has become respectable to write about the seamier side of Marx, a subject long avoided except by those awful anti-Communists. Ignatieff writes: "As a study in the psychology of loathing, Manuel's biography is truly first-rate. Marx despised most everyone: his mother, Jews, black and Asiatic peoples, Poles and other lesser Europeans, most fellow revolutionaries, all bourgeois politicians, as well as the bailiffs and the bill-collectors who tormented his penurious exile. The correspondence with Engels drips with scorn for 'niggers,' 'Juden,' and the 'Dreck and Scheisse' of the Socialist International. The German socialist leader Ferdinand Lassalle earned the ultimate compliment: 'Jewish nigger.'" At the same time, Ignatieff is not persuaded by Manuel that Marx's self-loathing had all that much to do with his Jewishness. For us, says Ignatieff, Marx's being a Jew was critical to his identity, but perhaps it was no big deal for Marx himself. He had a kindly, if condescending, relationship with his father, who had converted to Lutheranism.

While Marx-bashing may be on the edge of becoming fashionable, Ignatieff thinks there are reasons for his enduring appeal to some intellectuals. "If Marx will enjoy another afterlife, it will not be his particular doctrines themselves, but his larger intellectual project, his incredible ambition, which will provide the inspiration. What is so striking about the post-Marxist intellectual situation is the general theoretical silence about causation in history, the conceptual timidity, the refusal to even engage with the question of what general causes—demographic, technological, economic—determine the broad trends of our future. Analysis has been replaced by futurology, as in Alvin Toffler, or by academicism, as in Immanuel Wallerstein. At the very least, Marx was not shy of ultimate formulations. His theory was grand."

As numerous writers have concluded over the years, the attraction of Marxism is quasi-religious. Ignatieff observes: "Nowadays as every discipline retreats into the contemplation of its particulars and all engage in the forswearing of synoptic ambition, as philosophy gives way to irony, the Marxian project seems more tonic and even more difficult to contemplate. It is important to see that the human longing for the big picture will not disappear." The utopians of this century who have hitched a political program to their Explanation of Everything, and have along the way perpetrated atrocities beyond measure, are temporarily discredited. But it is only temporary. Another Explanation of Everything will surely come along, and we should not be surprised if it is ghostwritten by that self-loathing, inexhaustibly resentful dreamer of bizarre dreams, the unhappy madman Karl Marx.

FT

And Now For Something Truly Eerie

"Insidious." "Sinister." "Chilling." These are some of the words used to describe *Care of the Spitfire Grill*, which was the big hit at this year's Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah. So what's wrong with the film? There's nothing at all wrong with the film itself, according to almost everybody who saw it. It is a wonderful film that moved viewers to laughter and tears. The insidious, sinister, chilling factor has to do with its financing. It was sponsored by an order of Catholic priests who created the Sacred Heart League to advance "Judeo-Christian values" through film.

In two long stories in the *New YorkTimes*, film critic Caryn James explores the meaning of this sinister connection. The film finally was bought by a major production company, she reports, but others turned it down after learning about its financial backing. Everyone agrees that *Spitfire Grill* does not proselytize and does not ostensibly promote an ideology, but, as one film executive said, "If you know the context of the financing, an agenda does emerge in the film." The story continues: "'I was sitting in the theater when I read this statement of purpose [of the Sacred Heart League] and my jaw dropped,' said Bingham Ray, a partner in October Films. 'It sent a slight chill; that was the collective reaction.'"

In her second story, James notes that "the manipulatively heartwarming story about a young woman just out of prison who finds spiritual redemption in Maine" won the festival's feature film Audience Award. Contradicting her earlier story, she writes, "Nobody seemed to notice that it was financed by a conservative Mississippi company affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church and founded, as its 'mission statement' puts it, to 'present the values of the Judeo-Christian tradition.'" Conservative yet! Southern yet! Roman Catholic yet! You just have to know that great evil is afoot. Whatever the film's merits, says James, "watching it with the Sacred Heart League in mind makes all the biblical imagery seem slightly sinister." Biblical imagery by itself might be harmless enough, it seems, but here it is being employed by people who probably think it has something to do with the truth.

Caryn James continues: "The director, Lee David Zlotoff, is Jewish and, he says, extremely religious.

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But the movie's multidenominational roots—Catholic backers, Protestant characters, and a Jewish director—don't diminish the eerie sense that viewers are being proselytized without their knowledge." Eerie indeed. So are we to think Hollywood and the *New York Times*—not just Caryn James, for somebody at the paper approves of her and others taking zillions of column inches to vent their bigotry—are antireligious? Can one imagine a hit film being declared sinister and insidious only because of its source of funding—whether that source be casino owners, drug traffickers, cigarette manufacturers, or arms merchants? An instance of that happening does not come readily to mind. Religion is in a class by itself.

In the cultural world of Caryn James, religion—Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish—is alien and suspect. As is the intent to advance "Judeo-Christian values." It is all the more threatening when it takes care not to proselytize because then people "are being proselytized without their knowledge." The articles by Caryn James stand out only because they are more vulger than usual in declaring the dominant antireligious prejudice of Hollywood and the media, a prejudice that has given rise to what is inevitably called a culture war. And that has contributed, happily, to the decline of the circulation of the *Times* and of the audience for Hollywood movies.

We can look forward to the release of *Spitfire Grill*, and hope that it is not so inhibited in making a moral and spiritual point as Ms. James says. Its smashing success at the box office may have a salutary and collective chilling effect upon Hollywood producers. And maybe not, for, as Ms. James makes clear, that is a world driven more by ideology and prejudice than by the relatively innocent desire to make money.

FT

WHEN VICE WAS SPLENDID

Surveying the Republican field back in February, the editors of the *Weekly Standard* lament the absence of those who might have run, notably Colin Powell, Dan Quayle, William Bennett, and Jack Kemp. "Perhaps Dole will rebound and win. Perhaps Gramm or Alexander will emerge against a weakened Dole and a Forbes whose fortunes begin to flag. But what a pity that so many qualified, capable men—ones whose lives ought to have prepared them for this endeavor—chose to leave the field to those now running. A healthy democracy requires grand political ambition among those who would be its leaders. We may not be at the end of history, but we do seem perilously close to the end of such ambition."

Recall St. Augustine's reflections in *The City of God* on the ambition for glory in the Roman empire. The Romans called such striving for glory a virtue, but Augustine deemed it a "splendid vice." Such ambition, he said, is nothing but the vice of pride, albeit a very big vice that keeps many smaller vices in check. In our circumstance, it is not evident that pride does even that. The American people may not get the candidates that they deserve, but they get the candidates this nominating process can produce.

Writing in the same issue of the *Standard*, Alan Ehrenhalt says, "No nominating system is guaranteed to produce good Presidents. The process that created Dwight Eisenhower and Franklin Roosevelt also created Warren Harding. The circus we are engaging in now may yet serve up a statesman. It is impossible to be sure. What can be said with confidence is that the present system comes close to screening out conservatives of a particular temperament and attitude toward life. Taft's traditionalism, Eisenhower's caution, Stevenson's tragic perspective—all are bound to be scarce in a politics of self-nomination and compulsive Solutionism." Given the problems facing the country and world, says Ehrenhalt, candidates who possess "an instinctive caution and respect for consensus would be reassuringly appropriate."

Reviewing Richard Brookhiser's new book on George Washington (*Founding Father*), Edmund Morgan of Yale writes: "Washington seems to have been born with a thirst for public respect of a special kind. He wanted nothing more than honor, and he had identified its ingredients so clearly that he knew he would miss getting it if he showed himself wanting it as badly as he did." A long slide from Washington, but still to the point, one recalls Walter Mondale saying he did not have the "fire in the belly" to overcome the prospect of sleeping in a thousand motels on the primary trail. And George Bush expressing honest puzzlement that people were skeptical of the patrician view that the political life is a matter of offering oneself for "public service."

Today's nomination ordeal is designed for the self-promoters, and for such it is not an ordeal but an orgy. Honorable people may submit themselves to it because they honestly want to serve, but it was not designed for them. We are told that jumping through the primary hoops tests the mettle of candidates, but it is not clear that it tests for any gift pertinent to being a good President, while it very likely does corrupt such gifts. The old saw may again be vindicated, the one that says God looks out for children, drunks, and the American people. But so far this year has produced nothing to challenge Augustine's insight that the governance of the earthly city is driven by vice—what the *Standard* calls "grand political ambition" that is anything but

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grand. If Augustine is right, and I have no doubt he is, that is the way it will always be short of the sure establishment of the City of God. Yet one cannot help but wish that the vice were just a bit more splendid.

FT

A Possible Protestantism, Perhaps

"Protestantism now faces the most difficult struggle of all the occidental religions and denominations in the present world situation." So wrote the very influential Paul Tillich almost fifty years ago in *The Protestant Era.* Douglas John Hall of McGill University takes up Tillich's challenge, noting that he, like Tillich, is referring to "classic" or "mainline" Protestantism. He says that there are those who, like Peter Berger, question whether Protestantism's "culture religion" ever did internalize the theology of the Reformation. While Hall admits the question is valid, and well knows that what was called mainline is increasingly viewed as sideline, he does believe there is something to salvage.

"The judgment that Protestantism, classically conceived, has never achieved a hearing on this continent, however, is obviously excessive. One name alone, that of Reinhold Niebuhr, suffices to banish such a suggestion. It is nonetheless true, as Niebuhr's own struggle with his society demonstrates, that the spirit of Reformation Christianity never sat easily with the New World experiment and could only become the dominant element in American culture religion by being significantly reduced. That reduction, in my view, has become visible in the latter part of the present century. The question that Tillich asked half a century ago—a question that seemed strange to North American ears at the time—is today altogether existential with us." There is an existential urgency in Hall's prognosis: "Unless there is a radical theological renewal affecting the Protestant denominations at the congregational level, the remnants of classical Protestantism in North America will not survive the twenty-first century."

Not just any kind of theology will do. "Just here, however, we encounter the nub of the crisis of Protestantism in North America today. The theology that has been undertaken by professionals since the failure of Protestant liberalism, which in our context coincides roughly with the societal crises dating from approximately 1960, has simply not affected the churches. Liberalism—to be sure, in reduced forms—made its way into the pews, partly because of its relative simplicity and partly because it was so compatible with the regnant worldview. One does not lament its passing, but one does lament the passing of the incipient articulation of thought that liberalism engendered at the congregational level. Neither so-called neoorthodoxy nor any of the various 'theologies of' that have succeeded it can claim to have continued and deepened that beginning."

Particularly unhelpful, Hall believes, are feminist and other theologies born from and chiefly borne by a sense of grievance. "As for the theologies emanating from special-interest groups, while they have undoubtedly contributed to a certain necessary ferment in the churches, they have not greatly stimulated the kind of foundational thinking that (in the language of my thesis) renews. At their best, they challenged the status quo by bearing witness to the real oppressiveness that is the shadow side of 'the good' pursued by the dominant culture and church; at their worst, they have created the impression that the only thing that can be said about the majority element in the churches is that it is inherently oppressive."

What Once Existed

Hall, like this writer, is of a certain age, and he recalls the books that in the 1960s stirred young Protestant theologians to dream dreams of a theological renewal that would break Christianity out of its cultural shackles—books such as Berger's *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies,* J. C. Hoekendijk's *The Church Inside Out,* and William Stringfellow's *My People Is the Enemy.* Hall's article appears in *Theology Today,* the very mainline publication that once championed such dreams, and he wonders why those books are now forgotten, and why others like them are not being written. One answer, he believes, is the aforementioned "interest group theologies," and the ways in which theology has been commandeered and politicized by the "justice and peace" cadres. Theology as grievance and theology as political tool are much easier to deal with than a theology that demands "a whole new understanding of the Church and its vocation in the world."

It may be, Hall suggests, that "as the mainline churches dwindle and the question of their raison d'être becomes more blatant" a few serious people will undertake the deep rethinking that is required. Quoting Hegel, "The owl of Minerva takes flight at evening," he thinks desperation, too, may have its uses. He holds out the hope that "mainline Protestants will form new alliances with moderate evangelicals and progressive Catholics, and, in the process, begin to recover a gospel that is more than both law (ethics) and culture religion." As much as one sympathizes with Hall's lament, that seems less

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than plausible. After all, it is the self-consciously moderate evangelicals and progressive Catholics who are most entrenched in the liberal tradition that Hall rightly says has brought Protestantism to its present sorry pass.

Nonetheless, Hall is not giving up. "In any case, *serious* Christians have no alternative other than to believe that such a renewal is possible, and to work for it in whatever ways open to them. Protestantism is not eternal. Jesus Christ did not promise that the gates of hell would not prevail against Protestantism! But the Protestant spirit and principle (Tillich) is of the essence of Christianity; therefore, to abandon the once-mainline Protestant churches to their own confusion and the designs of the ideologues ought to be considered in some profound sense a sin against the Holy Spirit!" It is a touchingly wan note on which to end. Given his own analysis, there is no apparent connection between maintaining oldline Protestantism and maintaining Tillich's (and the Reformation's) Protestant principle. In historical fact—and the Protestant principle, among other things, attends closely to history—they would seem to have become antithetical.

One wonders if in his conclusion Douglas John Hall might not have done better to return to his reflection on the "raison d'être" of the oldline churches. What purpose do they serve? Is it not possible that a gospel that is "more than ethics and culture religion" can be and is today proclaimed among orthodox Catholics and among evangelicals who do not think of themselves as moderate? While he calls for a basic and radical rethinking, Hall stops short of where his argument would seem to lead. After all these years, he seems still captive to the mainline/oldline/sideline Protestantism that Dietrich Bonhoeffer nearly sixty years ago aptly described as Protestantism without the Reformation. As Bonhoeffer understood, the Protestantism that is truly of the Reformation must always be returning to the question of the raison d'être of its separation from Catholicism. That is the question to which Hall's reflections tend and to which, one hopes, he will attend in the future.

FT

NOT SO RADICAL NONVIOLENCE

"There is no way to peace. Peace is the way." The maxim is attributed to the late A. J. Muste, who figured for a large part of this century as a leader of pacifist thought and activism. Of course, today everything is more complex, as Adam said to Eve on their way out of the garden. "In the 1990s, the means of living out a commitment to nonviolence for many seem more complex," opines the editor of the *National Catholic Reporter* (*NCR*). The reference is to Bosnia and the fact that a remarkable number of the champions of nonviolence have also championed President Clinton's sending of U.S. troops.

Bosnia is not a hot political topic right now, and probably won't be unless, God forbid, there are many American casualties. The date of withdrawal is safely set on the far side of the election, and if the slaughter then resumes, the U.S. mission will be chalked up as yet another on a growing list of foreign policy fiascoes. Meanwhile, *NCR* and others fret about squaring the circle of nonviolent violence. "For many in the peace movement, the issues appeared clearer in . . . the Reagan Administration." That is understandable. Moral clarity is wondrously enhanced when one is opposing the policy of the other side's President. Moral complexity sets in when it is the policy of your President. (Bill Clinton being, for some unexplained reason, the President of people in "the peace movement." It is probably related to something he did back in the 1960s, a decade that for *NCR* and like-minded Christians has never died.)

The editor notes that complexity in the peace movement is not new, and recalls earlier disagreements between such as Daniel Berrigan, Dorothy Day, and Thomas Merton. He fails to note that they never disagreed about the moral impermissibility of supporting the use of military force. "Have we stayed faithful to the Christian call to a radically nonviolent way of life?" the editor anxiously asks. "Faithfulness to a nonviolent lifestyle cannot help but call one to further soul-searching and a wider reexamination of conscience and life." Wider, but not necessarily deeper. Having bowed in the direction of the requisite soul-searching, *NCR* comes up with the inoffensive observation that "the Spirit can move good women and men to respond honestly in different ways." Then, as though eager to escape the quivering incoherence of this limp defense of Christian nonviolence, the editor concludes by reaching for a quite different tradition. "As Chinese Taoist philosophy teaches: There is one path; there are many paths."

So A. J. Muste got it wrong after all. Sometimes the way to peace is to send in the troops. That conclusion doesn't bother those of us who have never been pacifists. It is a poignant thing, however, to see people who have pledged themselves to "a radically nonviolent way of life" offer up their conscience to the exigencies of presidential politics. One is reminded of the scene in *Man for All Seasons* where Thomas More at his trial asks to examine the new seal of office worn by the perjurer Richard Rich.

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"Why, Richard, it profits a man nothing to give his soul for the whole world. But for Wales!" But for Bill Clinton?

FT

Dead Honest

I am prejudiced, of course, but I thought J. Bottum's "Facing Up to Infanticide" (FT, February) a big help in clearing out the cant in current talk about an outbreak of pro-choice honesty in the abortion debate. He focused on the much discussed articles of last fall by Naomi Wolf in the *New Republic* and George McKenna in *Atlantic*, and he argued that the newfound "honesty" was in fact laying the groundwork not for the restriction of abortion but for the extension of the abortion license to born babies and other inconvenient persons.

As it happens, McKenna, professor of political science at the City College of New York, does not disagree with Bottum (see letters in this issue). Writing in that admirable quarterly, the *Human Life Review*, McKenna notes that Wolf does not hesitate to call the fetus "a baby" and is critical of "Yuppie parents-to-be who buy those nice holistic birthing books, with pretty color pictures of unborn babies, [and yet] are ready to consign the unwanted unborn to the trash bag." McKenna likes the following in Wolf's article: "So, what will it be: Wanted fetuses are charming, complex, REM-dreaming little beings whose profile on the sonogram looks just like Daddy, but unwanted ones are mere 'uterine material'?" That's the right question, in McKenna's view, but he has big problems with where Naomi Wolf goes from there.

McKenna writes: "All right, then, unborn babies are babies. But now Wolf goes on to insist that 'sometimes the mother must be able to decide that the fetus, *in its full humanity*, must die' [emphasis mine]. Putting it more bluntly—Wolf, after all, wants straight talk—her proposition is that sometimes a mother must be able to kill her baby. When? She does not directly answer that question, but her view is not hard to detect. She notes that when the pollsters ask Americans whether they think abortion should be 'a matter between a woman, her doctor, her family, her conscience, and her God,' support for abortion shoots up to 72 percent. She recalls her own success in silencing a pro-life critic by admitting that 'of course' she had a baby inside her but that if she felt the need to kill it, 'that would be between myself and God.' This suggests a triangular relationship: the woman, her baby, and God. But that is not what she means. In acknowledgment of the fact that many of her pro-choice readers do not believe in God, Wolf adds that 'if you are secular and prefer it' you can just say 'conscience.' God' is a kind of tempo-setter here, a pious word meant to convey a sense of solemnity. The decision actually involves only the woman, the baby, and herself. And, since the baby has no voice in the decision, it comes down to the woman and herself. So if the question were asked *when* a mother 'must be able to decide' whether or not to have her baby killed, her answer would have to be: whenever she feels like it."

When *Atlantic Monthly* published McKenna's article urging a Lincoln-like approach to the limitation and final abolition of abortion, the magazine was deluged with letters of protest, and its electronic bulletin board nearly exploded. Not so over at the *New Republic*, where Wolf's article elicited little response. How could this be, since both articles had been declared so daring in their political incorrectness? Cut to the bottom line: McKenna's article challenged the unlimited abortion license while Wolf was simply proposing a rhetorical strategy to maintain it, and perhaps extend it. Stop saying that abortion doesn't kill a baby, she advised. Admit that it is a baby and then kill it, but regretfully. The readers of the *New Republic* can go along with that. A tear, real or feigned, is but a small price to pay for maintaining the right to abortion at any time for any reason throughout the course of a pregnancy. And it no doubt did not escape the notice of some readers that the self-absolution of soulful regret may come in handy when it is time to get rid of grandma or others whom we acknowledge, with a brave honesty that does us credit, really are real people.

FT

While We're At It

■ Last December, in Euless, Texas, a young magazine salesman was charged with assaulting an elderly woman who refused to buy a subscription from him. Six months earlier, in Fort Collins, Colorado, a man who turned away another subscription salesman was similarly attacked. Ours is a somewhat more low-key sales approach: send us the addresses of those you think might like the journal, and we'll send them a free sample copy in your name. Please do it now, before we're forced to consider alternative measures.

■ Professor Melvyn New of the University of Florida reviews a book on anti-Semitic stereotypes in

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English culture. He criticizes the author (Frank Felsenstein) for not recognizing that "the Jewish way of thinking is not a good idea superseded by a better idea, but an idea legitimately, potently, eternally in conflict with Christianity." And it is in conflict with Christianity because Christianity is in conflict with it. New says Felsenstein is so much a liberal that he cannot take theology seriously. "Felsenstein is blind to the deep embeddedness of anti-Semitism in Christianity's self-definition: the annihilation of Jewry is not an afterthought of Christianity, but its violent point of origin." Only when that is understood does one see "why anti-Semitic notions put down sturdy and unkillable roots in Christian societies." One wonders if Prof. New really believes that 90 percent of his fellow citizens are pledged to a religion that is originally and irradicably set upon the violent annihilation of Jews. It seems very unlikely. The more probable explanation is that some religions can be slandered with impunity, and some academics enjoy the frisson of fantasizing that they live in great peril. In a victim society, not to be threatened is not to be. Imagine the burden of everyday life at the University of Florida where most people are oblivious to your existence and those who aren't are so very nice. How much more interesting to believe that they really want to kill you.

■ In New York, Berkeley, Madison (Wisconsin) and a few other places in the country there are still lots of people who feel complimented if charged with being socialists. The main political writers for the *New York Observer* are among them. Shortly before the New York primary, its headline declared, "A LOOSE BUCHANAN IS HEADING THIS WAY!" But *Observer* pundits were not sure whether this is bad news or good. After all, Buchanan had picked up the fallen standard of the socialist crusade against Wall Street and all its works and all its ways. Columnist Joe Conason is skeptical. He says Buchanan is captive to a bunch of right-wing Protestant kooks who champion Christian Reconstructionism, in obedience to the teachings of R. J. Rushdoony, who, he claims, looks forward to a society that executes people for adultery and homosexuality. Buchanan, according to Conason, "is beyond the pale of modern Catholicism, Mr. Buchanan's nominal religion." Feature writer Terry Golway, on the other hand, is intrigued by Buchanan as the standard-bearer of leftist class warfare and attributes this to the fervor of his Catholic devotion. "If it sounds to liberal ears as if Mr. Buchanan has gotten religion, at least on matters economic, it should be noted that the religion was always there to be had. American Catholicism, of which Mr. Buchanan is a fervent member, has a long tradition of two-fisted dissent from WASP individualism and market-driven inequality. The Civil War-era Catholic bishop of New York, John Hughes (who was sort of the Rev. Al Sharpton of his day), complained that the rich were buying their way out of the draft, a practice that allowed 'the wealthy to become wealthier in their quiet homes.' And New York's Gilded Age saw the rise of a remarkable priest and social critic named Dr. Edward McGlynn, who quickly fell in with Henry George, the writer and mayoral candidate of single-tax fame. McGlynn's Anti-Poverty Society placed the Church in opposition to the voracious robber barons and the social misery they inflicted on late-nineteenth-century America. Yet there are many who believe Pat Buchanan attracts his coreligionists merely because he is a champion of the unborn, the orthodox, and perhaps even the Latin mass." That's a pretty quirky reading of Catholic history (Fr. McGlynn was in fact a notable dissenter from Church authority), but within hailing distance of part of the story. For Conason, Buchanan is "Fascism Lite" and his defeat "will come from the same quarters that smashed fascism the first time around"—mainly from "a revitalized union movement." These are but tiny samples from the eruption of hysteria sparked by the thought that Mr. Buchanan might actually win the Republican nomination. As this is written I am just off the phone with a network producer who wants to send over a crew to interview me about my "different view" on whether Pat Buchanan is an anti-Semite. The received view, it appears, is that he is. My "different view" is that anti-Semitism is a vice so evil as to exclude a person from legitimate public discourse, and that, while many sensible people worry about it, the evidence that Buchanan is an anti-Semite is, in my judgment, less than conclusive. For some, however, it seems that "anti-Semite" is just one more on a long list of epithets to be thrown at people you don't like. By the time this sees print, the Buchanan candidacy may very well be yesterday's news. But already he has been treated to a deluge of political vitriol rare even in the rough history of American democracy. For all that one might agree with him on some questions (abortion being the outstanding instance), Buchanan has recklessly and, it seems, gleefully been pushing hot buttons in our national life with all the exuberance of one who enjoys making mischief more than providing leadership toward a truly common American future. As Harvey Mansfield of Harvard recently observed in the *Times Literary Supplement*, however, most of us are oddly reluctant to admit that there is a close connection between democracy and demagoguery. The latter (*demos* + *agogos* from *agein*) means to lead the people, but one person's democratic leadership is another's exploitation of prejudice and faction. In trying to sort this all out in the months ahead, I expect we will all be put to an uncommon test of civility and common sense.

■ Contrary to Yeats, it sometimes seems to be a narrowing gyre that keeps circling in until it arrives at the point where it started. The Rev. James R.

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Adams directs a new "Center for Progressive Christianity" that is going to hold a national forum this June at the Episcopal Cathedral in Columbia, South Carolina. Against the conservative turn in religion and culture, Mr. Adams says that "Many people may be attracted to aspects of Christianity but also have respect for other religious traditions. They think how people treat each other is more important than what people say they believe. Churches today too often fail to provide a place where such people can be supported in exploring their deepest questions about life. Instead many churches peddle exclusive dogmas that cause divisions in society." Deeds not creeds, questions not answers. And so, as Eliot didn't say, they arrive where they started and know the place for the umpteenth time, survivors of a disappointing journey, huddling together to assure one another that, despite all, they have seen the future and it is liberal Christianity. (And, if the word Christianity threatens to "cause divisions," that too can be negotiated.)

■ The Children's Zoo in Central Park has been a beloved fixture for generations and is now being redesigned. The committee in charge announced that they would have to get rid of sculptures such as Noah's Ark and Jonah's Whale since they are religious, and the use of public funds for their renovation would be a violation of church and state. Now, according to the *New York Times*, Parks Commissioner Henry J. Stern is stepping back a little. "He said Noah should not be viewed as a biblical character, which the [wildlife] society has called inappropriate for a public park, but as the first conservationist because he saved animals before the flood."

■ On any given weekend, more than half of America's teenage population is in church, significantly higher than the adult percentage. Gallup asked teenagers, How important is it that parents go to church with children and teens? Thirty-eight percent said it was very important that parents go with teens, and another 35 percent said it was somewhat important. Fifty-one percent said it is important they go with children twelve and under, and 33 percent said it was somewhat important. So about 55 percent of teenagers go to church each week, and about 75 percent of them think their parents should go too. I don't know how much good news you can take at one sitting, but there are these other findings. While expressing tolerance of situations where single parents are raising children, teenagers have very traditional attitudes about their own future. Ninety-five percent of teenagers plan to marry, 93 percent plan to have children, only 19 percent think it likely they could have an illegitimate child some day, 80 percent think it is too easy to get a divorce, 70 percent think divorced people did not work hard enough at saving their marriages, and 65 percent think they will never be divorced. Interestingly, there is slight difference between teenagers who do and those who do not go to church, except that 72 percent of those who do attend think it unlikely they will ever be divorced, compared with 56 percent who do not attend. There are other questions one wishes Mr. Gallup might have asked, and of course these answers tell us nothing about what these kids will actually end up doing, but what they say they intend to do is, all in all, an encouragement.

■ Here's a mailing inviting me to join the ACLU. Not to worry. It begins with highlighted quotes of Ralph Reed and Newt Gingrich, who apparently want to, among other horribles, revive the Inquisition and repeal the First Amendment. "*But we must fight back now—before it's too late,*" exhorts executive director Ira Glasser. The mailing includes a flyer with glowing endorsements of the ACLU and its importance to American freedom. There are three such endorsements, one by John F. Kennedy, one by Adlai E. Stevenson, and one by Earl Warren. It would probably be unkind to tell Mr. Glasser that they are all dead.

■ Arriving in the mail is this attractive prospectus from the Progress and Freedom Foundation, a Washington-based think tank. They do some good work, but I was struck by the motto on the prospectus cover: "Progress: The belief that Mankind has advanced in the past, is presently advancing, and will continue to advance through the foreseeable future." O ye of great, and tragically misplaced, faith.

■ "When you consider the issues of the day, which of the following is most likely to influence your own views?" According to Gallup, only 7 percent of Americans check "Your own religious leaders." Forty-two percent say "News media commentators and reporters," while 30 percent opt for "Your family or friends." David Frum has a nice term for those who are always saying that their views are "beyond" liberal and conservative, or that liberal and conservative are no longer useful categories. He calls them the "Beyondists." The same Gallup poll provides slight support for Beyondism. Asked whether religious leaders have too much or too little influence on public opinion, 34 percent of self-identified liberals say too much and 21 percent say too little, while only 16 percent of conservatives say too much and 36 percent say too little. This poll, like many others, shows a strong correlation between those who say that religion is important in their lives and those who describe themselves as conservative. Just one more item: Asked whether the government or religious organizations should be more responsible for "providing assistance to the

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poor," 74 percent of liberals and 39 percent of conservatives answer the government. And so it goes with question after question. It does seem, all in all, and the Beyondists notwithstanding, that Gilbert is still right in saying that nature does contrive "That every boy and every gal, That's born into the world alive, Is either a little Liberal, Or else a little Conservative."

■ In his presidential address to the Central Division of the American Philosophical Association, Philip L. Quinn of Notre Dame takes on the question of "Political Liberalisms and Their Exclusions of the Religious." He goes on at length about "religion and the public square" without mentioning you-know-who, which bothers you-know-who only a little (see "He Who Steals My Words . . ." January). Unlike conservatives, says Quinn, liberals affirm "the duty of civility." Liberals who are religious are "in a position to argue for liberal laws and policies from religious premises and thereby show secular liberals that some religious people are their allies, and they would also be in a position to dispute the political agenda of the Religious Right on religious grounds. I am convinced that such a challenge would be good for the health of the American body politic." Quinn also wants "to encourage religious citizens to refrain from advocating repeal of the Establishment Clause or trying to make the United States into a 'Christian nation,' whatever that might mean." In addition, "I would make similar claims about other, less dramatic cases in which it is morally permissible but less than ideal for citizens to introduce their religious concerns into politics." So religion in public life can serve the limited purpose of scoring a point against the awful "religious right" and of showing that religious people can be good liberals, too, but in general citizens should keep their religion to themselves. Word about the movement to repeal the Establishment Clause, which is apparently a big thing in South Bend, Indiana, has not yet reached New York or, as far as I know, Virginia Beach, Virginia. Once again, Notre Dame is ahead of the curve.

■ Some articles have a longer shelf life than others. Last August, Jerry Muller published "The Conservative Case for Abortion" in the *New Republic*, and it has established itself as a standard reference for political and economic conservatives who are unhappy with the pro-life movement. The article was a grave disappointment in this shop, since Muller, who teaches at Catholic University, is a gifted intellectual who had played a valuable part in some of our Institute's programs. The article's argument is that conservatives strongly support "the bourgeois family" and the bourgeois family depends upon the control of reproduction that contraception and abortion provide. Writing in a new magazine, *Culture Wars*, John J. Reilly indicates that he is not persuaded. Muller, he contends, is but a typical member of the "Overclass" that acknowledges no truth other than personal preference, and that is the very antithesis of anything that warrants the name conservative. Reilly writes: "Muller's argument is really about the need for a eugenic contraceptive policy, one designed not to weed out bad genes, but bad culture. Abortion is regarded simply as another technique to that end. Overclass culture is capable of acknowledging that there may be some special ethical issues involved in the abortion question, but is quite without any mechanism for assessing the importance of one moral principle with respect to another. That is why it calls principles 'values,' like quantities that can be added up and averaged out. There is therefore nothing 'bourgeois' about the Overclass, if by bourgeois you mean the culture of people like the well-to-do Victorians. To the Overclass every virtue is a construct, subject to no scheme of value but their own will. People who think like this are not 'conservative,' whether they are Overclass lawyers or illegal aliens. They do not and they will not create strong families, because they think that families are arbitrary constructs, defined according to personal convenience and dissoluble at their own considered whim. Having rejected traditional moral norms, they have no history to conserve, and they will make nothing worth keeping."

■ The line between quackery and medicine has never been quite so bright as the professionals would have us believe, but it is necessary to keep trying to determine where it should be drawn. That is why in 1992 Congress directed the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to set up an Office of Alternative Medicine. The office has only $14 million out of an NIH budget of $11 billion, but that doesn't stop conventional practitioners and scientists from complaining about the competition from "peddlers of snake oil remedies." For instance, Robert L. Park and Ursula Goodenough, professors of physics and biology respectively, have a rant on the op-ed page of our parish newspaper against the respectability being given to the claims of "amazing health benefits from touch therapy, spiritual healing, and a dozen other remedies that were once the stuff of tabloids." They allege that health maintenance organizations are willing to pay for alternative treatments "because they are far cheaper than traditional medicines." They grudgingly admit that many people testify that they have been greatly helped by homeopathic and other techniques, but that is attributable to their gullibility and the well-known "placebo effect." It is all too obvious, however, that Park and Goodenough, who think medical business as usual is good enough, are offended by the competition. They note that "About $13 billion per year is spent by Americans on alternative treatments, many of which have no scientific basis." And they

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are offended by the challenge to their faith commitment: "Biomedical research (much of it financed by NIH) is on a spectacular roll, with important new insights emerging daily. These gains, however, can alienate those who want to believe that events are not determined solely by physical laws. There is nostalgia for a time when things seemed simpler and more natural." The Parks and Goodenoughs are touchingly devout acolytes of scientistic orthodoxy and seem quite incapable of seeing that they have things exactly backward. What is really hard to believe, what reflects a nostalgia for a simpler time when reality was reduced to the model of laboratory experimentation, is the dogma that events are determined solely by physical laws. That was the little orthodoxy that was for so very long established by government funding, and it is not surprising that its devotees are having difficulties in adjusting to even a very modest measure of disestablishment. I have no doubt there are charlatans out there promoting all sorts of phony cures, some of which may actually be harmful. And I am personally grateful for traditional practitioners who cut a big cancerous tumor out of my gut a few years ago, a problem that I doubt would have been amenable to touch therapy. On the other hand, honest doctors will admit how little they know, how many medical problems are caused or exacerbated by traditional treatments, and how often they are dumbfounded by cures that defy conventional explanations. So it would seem to be a very good thing that there is an Office of Alternative Medicine. There are more things in heaven and earth, Drs. Park and Goodenough, than are dreamt of in your philosophy. While we might have a measured sympathy for those who suffer from nostalgia for a simpler time when they had a monopoly on defining medical truth, true science moves on.

■ "Access Denied" pops up on the computer screen when you can't get into a classified file. (I saw that in the movies. My computer is primitive and only plugged into my own stuff.) Chicago law professor and feminist Linda Hirschmann urges women to deny "sexual access" to men who are not prepared to offer a quid pro quo. According to this article in the Episcopal magazine, *Witness*, Hirschmann wants strict enforcement of laws prohibiting fornication among unmarried adults, and believes that current statutory rape laws should be used to jail teenagers who engage in sex. "Frankly," says Hirschmann, "I would raise the age of sexual consent to eighteen, maybe even twenty-one, so that a girl is out of high school before she's harvested for sex." (These feminists do talk that way.) Men are stronger and more politically powerful, says Hirschmann, "So when they bargain for sexual access in society they wield a lot of advantages." While she favors *criminalizing sex between consenting* heterosexual adults, she recognizes that "the machinery it would take to enforce such laws would make even a 'femi-nazi' like me shudder." Women should understand that their ability to give men sexual access is a powerful commodity, says Hirschmann, who developed the idea of sexual "bargaining" from her work with labor unions. Is this woman pro-family, or what?

■ Way over there on the left end of the evangelical spectrum is Jim Wallis of *Sojourners* magazine, and way over there on the right end is Pat Robertson of Pat Robertson Inc. Reviewing *The Soul of Politics* by Wallis and *The New World Order* by Robertson, Keith Pavlischek, writing in the promising new magazine, *Regeneration*, says that, far from being polar opposites, Wallis and Robertson are "the political twin sons of William Jennings Bryan." Come again? Pavlischek means that they are both heirs of the populist enthusiasm of Bryan, and he quotes Mark Noll's description of that phenomenon in the book *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*: "Since Evangelicalism has remained a deeply populist movement, the most visible forms of political reflection have still been intuitive—carried on without serious recourse to self-conscious theological construction, systematic moral philosophy, thorough historical analysis, or careful social scientific research." Pavlischek concludes: "While Robertson seeks to crack the 'code language' of internationalists who speak of things like a 'New World Order,' Wallis seeks to decode the language of 'family values.' And both, in typically gnostic fashion, seem to assume that they hold some special, code-deciphering charisma. That is why the soul of neither of these books is identifiably Christian and why the politics isn't really politics. Both seem to think that they can ignore with impunity centuries of responsible Christian reflection on political life. No need to carefully work through the distinction between a chastened patriotism and an idolatrous nationalism if the Republic has a 'destiny' as a chosen people or if it is 'Babylon' reincarnated. No need to work through centuries of Christian reflection on the use of lethal force and how it might apply to the Iraqi crisis. But, even more seriously, no need to reflect on the nature of the Church as an exclusive community of believers. Gnostic-like 'prophetic' insight trumps serious reflection. I suspect that a century from now historians looking back on evangelical political reflection may still be wondering why the evangelical mind at the end of the twentieth century was so scandalous. They will know what it is too early for us to tell: whether Bryan's political grandchildren grew up to have more sense than their parents."

■ The Catholic Church's teaching that *it* lacks authority to ordain women to the priesthood, a teaching now formally described as infallible, is being deplored by the usual suspects in the usual

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ways, but there is reason to believe that the controversy created by agitation for women's ordination is going out with a whimper rather than a bang. The London *Tablet* has a novel take on the question, however. The editor interprets the Code of Canon Law—Canon 749, to be precise—as preventing the Pope from saying that the teaching on women's ordination is infallible. Of the canon in question, the editor says, "Every Catholic is bound by it, including the Pope and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in their promulgation of doctrine and all the faithful in their reception of it." Biblical precedent, tradition, and the Pope are not infallible but canon law is? The judicial trumps the doctrinal? Any argument in a storm, I suppose. In the same issue of the *Tablet*, celebrated dissenter Hans Küng rails against the "compassionless rigorism" and "spiritual dictatorship" of John Paul II and declares his fidelity to Catholic teaching as defined by his anticipated Vatican Council III. Not to be outdone, editor John Wilkins admires the sentiment of a former colleague who declared, "I believe . . . in the Catholicism of two thousand years hence." That seems safe enough. Canon law does not allow for troublesome directives from the distant future. With Fr. Küng "waiting for Vatican III" and Mr. Wilkins pledging his obedience to the Church of Anno Domini 3996, the rest of us will somehow have to do without their help in coping with the Church that is. Progressives who say you can't turn back the clock are wondrously adept at turning it ahead. Since we know something about the past, those who seek refuge there must come to terms with some limitations. Escape into the future, on the other hand, is free-floating fancy. It is, I suppose, a liberation theology of sorts.

■ A private school in Hawaii gets some bad press because it declined to hire a headmaster who was not a Christian. It seems that the school suddenly rediscovered its Christian identity for the purpose of the hiring process. Now in Kalamazoo, Michigan, the Cub Scout pack at Haven Reformed Church doesn't want a Muslim, Abdul-Mutakallim, to be pack leader, even though he had worked with the pack for some years. Pastor Keith Lohman says that, since Scout Pack 293 is a church program, the top job should be held by a Christian. That sounds fair enough, but it seems that Muslim and Jewish parents with kids in the pack had not noticed anything ostensibly Christian about the program before this. In the public mind nominal church affiliation does not excuse religious discrimination, and on this the public mind may be right. Religious discrimination is a very good thing if there's something substantively religious to discriminate about.

■ G. K. Chesterton nuts (one of the grandest nuttinesses in this nutty world) may want to know that the Midwest Chesterton Society is holding its fifteenth annual meeting June 27-29 in Milwaukee's Cousins Center, and John Peterson (740 Spruce Road, Barrington, Illinois 60010) has all the pertinent information.

■ No good deed goes unreproached. The following letter is from Beverly Dolinsky in the "Metropolitan Diary" of our local newspaper. "Dear Diary: This morning at the C train 42nd Street stop I saw a blind man who seemed confused about where to go. I approached him and asked if he needed help. He said he wanted to go to the Port Authority Bus Terminal. When he took my arm so that I could help him, he felt my coat sleeve and asked what kind of coat I was wearing. 'Fur,' I said. 'Shame on you,' he replied."

■ We noted here the article in the *Nation* by Harvey Cox of Harvard Divinity School, imploring his fellow leftists to entertain the possibility that they might have something to learn from religion, and even from people associated with the Christian Coalition. Katha Pollitt, Associate Editor of that museum of liberalisms past, isn't buying. Religion, she declares, is "a farrago of authoritarian nonsense, misogyny, and humble pie, the eternal enemy of human happiness and freedom." Peter Steinfels of our local newspaper offers the wry observation: "Professor Cox is an inveterate yeasayer who has always spied the workings of God's grace (as well as the contours of the Social Gospel) in one cultural movement after another, from the pragmatic secularism of the Kennedy era to the carnival spirit of the counterculture and the worldwide growth of Pentecostalism. So, he asks, why not cast an appreciative eye at the Christian Coalition, or at least at the wider body of conservative believers who surround them?" Ms. Pollitt, on the other hand, is a "born naysayer," says Steinfels. "With equal amount of satisfaction and self-mockery, she recounts in her column how, by merely mentioning on the CNN television program *Crossfire* that she does not believe in God, she earned the title 'Free-Thought Heroine of 1995' from the Freedom From Religion Foundation. She is, in fact, a kind of conservative, relishing the role of unreconstructed defender of that old-time atheism. (One can imagine her singing, 'It was good enough for Diderot, it's good enough for me.')" The reactionaries of the *Nation*'s world are decidedly on Ms. Pollitt's side of this question. "Whenever I feel unloved," she told Steinfels, "I can always write another column assaulting religion, and I get all this fan mail."

■ Once again PLAGAL (Pro-Life Alliance of Gays and Lesbians) was at the big Washington march in January. Once again their support was warmly welcomed by most pro-lifers. Once again they were attacked by other homosexual groups for breaking ranks with the party line on abortion. And once

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again a few pro-lifers tried to prevent their joining the march. Philip Arcidi, president of PLAGAL, asked a number of people to sign a statement, and I gladly complied. The statement reads: "Pro-Lifers work together for one common goal: to save mothers and their children from abortion. The Pro-Life movement, which encompasses a broad spectrum of our nation, does not impose on its members a consensus on other issues. Therefore, we work with peaceful groups that evidence singular dedication to this common goal. We join together for a cause that is stronger than our differences, and we will continue to work together until the rights of America's unborn are restored."

■ The "leap of faith" advocated by Kierkegaard was derided as a "copout" by Albert Camus in his 1944 essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*. There the "godless saint" had promised "to live without appeal" to a transcendent Being. Reviewing Camus' last, and unfinished, novel *The First Man* in the London *Tablet*, Michael Scott-Moncrieff speculates that the executors may have waited so long to publish it out of fear that people would think Camus had compromised the posture that appealed so strongly to a self-consciously alienated generation. In the reviewer's judgment, however, *The First Man* is the best of the novels and represents something like a consummation. "And by the end—here, in Camus' last testament to mankind—he proclaims the power of grace through repentance, the need for a father who would blame him and praise him 'by right not of power but authority,' and says of his beloved, impoverished, illiterate, and uncomplaining mother: 'Maman *is* Christ.' By grace, and the power of his own 'boot-straps,' Camus' thought becomes truly doctrinal through the love he bears her: 'She does not know Christ's life, except on the cross. Yet who is closer to it?'" The difference from the earlier novels is described this way: "In comparison his previous novels seem to suffer—as cut diamonds do from uncut ones—from a sort of sand-blown purity, honed to the bone, a sense of 'precisely this and no more.' But in this one he is struggling with the 'more'; still holding himself back, perhaps, from making a definitive leap; but tottering splendidly on the brink." Buried among the notes that Camus wrote to himself, which are included in *The First Man*, is this dramatically revised reflection on Sisyphus and the futility of life: "*Begin the last part with this scene*: 'The blind donkey who for years patiently turns his wheel in a circle, enduring beatings, the ferocity of nature, the sun, the flies, still enduring, and from that slow circular motion, seemingly fruitless, monotonous, painful, water endlessly flows. . . .'" *Seemingly* fruitless, but from it endlessly flows the water that, the reader may infer, is not unrelated to saving grace.

■ "Are American Jews Still Liberal?" That is the question asked by Earl Raab of Brandeis University, who analyzes a recent survey of Jews in the San Francisco area. Only 10 percent identify themselves as "conservative," but those who say they are "moderate" are increasingly conservative—at least on some questions. In this survey, they come down strongly conservative, for instance, on attitudes toward the size of government, crime, and affirmative action. On other questions, however, they are all crowded at one end of the spectrum. For the most notable instance, 90 percent approve the proposition that "Women should be able to have abortions without restriction." Raab believes that one big reason behind Jewish support for abortion, and their Democratic voting pattern, is their fear of "the religious right." This touches on what Raab calls "the security question," since publicly assertive Christianity is associated with the threat of anti-Semitism. "Particularly striking is that about nine-tenths of liberals, three-quarters of moderates, and two-thirds of conservatives in the survey express alarm over the role of evangelical Christians in politics. Much of the intensity of Jewish opinion on this issue undoubtedly stems from fear of anti-Semitism, a fear that persists despite the fact that it rests partly on a fallacy. Although Jews have regularly rated Christian fundamentalists as the American group most inimical to them, in one of the most comprehensive studies of recent years no discernible difference on the standard index of anti-Semitic beliefs was noted between fundamentalists and other Christians (or, for that matter, between Democrats and Republicans)." Here is Raab's conclusion, offering his answer to the question posed by his title: "And so, if the past is any guide, there will continue to be much truth in the notion that if you scratch an American Jew, you will find a Democratic voter. The complicating news today is that if you scratch somewhat deeper, you will not always find a liberal."

■ Perhaps an editor with a puckish sense of humor put the story alongside another about Old Faithful, the geyser at Yellowstone Park that is no longer erupting on schedule. The story by Karen De Witt of the *New York Times* is about Feminist Expo, an event that brought three thousand women to Washington to revive the failing fortunes of their movement. Gloria Steinem, "blond braid silvered with gray," was there, as was octogenarian Molly Yard, past president of the National Organization for Women (NOW). Some eruptions can still be counted on. Feminist Expo was sponsored by the Feminist Majority Foundation "and 299 other organizations." If the three thousand figure is correct, that's ten members per organization. Ms. De Witt reports that the executive director of NOW "chided reporters" at a news conference that they should not just talk to "the oldies but goldies" but should focus on the younger women at the meeting. Having received her

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orders, Ms. De Witt dutifully devotes the rest of her story to quoting younger women. Yes, they do think feminism is still relevant. Ms. De Witt does note that speakers stressed cooperation across racial lines, although "the conference participants were overwhelmingly white." From the fact that the obviously sympathetic Ms. De Witt does not quote one person of color, one may reasonably suspect that there were no persons of color to quote. The meeting issued "a call to arms reminiscent of the Freedom Summer of 1964, the civil rights movement's campaign to register black voters in Mississippi, one flier reading 'Freedom Summer '96.'" Back to the future. Some call to arms. Interestingly, in the *Times*' generous coverage of Feminist Expo there was almost no mention of abortion. The big excitement was for advancing affirmative action, with particular attention to gender-preference in hiring and promotion. You have to hand it to them, those oldies but goldies sure know how to catch the cusp of public enthusiasm. As for the other story, it seems the problem with Old Faithful has to do with undetected seismic shifts.

■ We mentioned a new group with the striking name Protestants Against Birth Control but gave, because we were given, the wrong phone number. The right one is 414-483-3399 (fax: 414-571-4226).

■ University Faculty for Life holds its annual conference May 31-June 1 at Georgetown University. Featured speakers are Julian Simon, Mercedes Wilson, William Brennan, and Laura Garcia. For information, write UFL, 120 New North Bldg., Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. 20007.

■ In 1969, Senator Daniel P. Moynihan had the support of Jewish leadership, mainline Protestants, and the Catholic bishops for his Family Assistance Plan. It was a good plan, says Bishop James T. McHugh of Camden, New Jersey, but as time went by the social liberals jumped ship "and the bishops stood alone as the plan went down." Bishop McHugh offers a succinct description of our present circumstance: "Now we seem poised for a replay, but the ground has shifted. The Congress is intent on cutting costs. The President is given to rhetoric but lacks an alternative plan. Moynihan and his allies are caught up in despair, and the Catholic social activists know not where to go except to defend the status quo." His analysis, unfortunately, rings true. There is a measure of truth in the title of Mrs. Clinton's book, *It Takes a Village to Raise a Child*, says the bishop, but the problem is that too many people, including, it seems, Mrs. Clinton, assume that a village means the government. The greater truth, according to Bishop McHugh, is that "it still takes a family to raise a child." Those who understand what has happened to families, and especially to poor families in the last three decades, need to come up with a Family Assistance Plan tailored to the world of 1996. Making children wards of the governmental village has been tried and has failed—catastrophically. Any proposal now must pass the test of enabling and inducing parents to do what they alone can do well, viz., rear the children that are theirs.

■ It's too late to sign up now, but here's a full-page advertisement in the *Christian Century* for a two-day April conference that bears the impressive title, "A Politics of the Image of God," and the equally impressive subtitle, "The Summit on Ethics and Meaning." A summit on ethics and meaning is the kind of thing that I would ordinarily not want to miss. The event is sponsored by Michael Lerner and his publication *Tikkun*, which styles itself "the magazine of liberal Jews." The principals gathering at the summit on ethics and meaning and a politics of the image of God include Cornel West, Jim Wallis, Jonathan Kozol, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Harvey Cox, Stephen Carter, and the Congressman son of Jesse Jackson, Jesse Jackson, Jr. The announcement says the summit meeting will advance "a whole new paradigm for politics, moving beyond left/right dichotomies." This is the much discussed nonpartisanship of what David Frum calls the Beyondists. Lest nonpartisanship get out of hand, however, we are told that participants "seek to counter the right's claim to be the voice of the ethical, spiritual, and family crisis in American society." Perhaps it is just as well to let the left be the voice of family crisis. The ad says, "The Summit will be a historic event. . . . By buying this ad in a Christian magazine, we at *Tikkun* are doing what we can to reach out to your world." Message received. "If you can't make it," the ad continues, "subscribe to *Tikkun* and join the discussion of the politics of meaning." Michael Lerner is credited with having put the First Lady on to "the politics of meaning," although she says she met with him but once, and that only for fifteen minutes or less. On the other hand, it has been reported that she sometimes has memory problems. In any event, I had to pass on The Summit on Ethics and Meaning. At the risk of sounding dismissive, the message of the Behindists posing as Beyondists is all too familiar by now.

■ They ought to be ashamed of themselves. Some wiseacres over at *Commonweal* have come up with this parody of the ubiquitous ads for the *New Oxford Review*. The full-page parody advertises the *New Ostrich Review* under a cartoon gargoyle wearing a papal tiara and the bold heading, "Do Catholics have bad breath?" "You'd sure think so," the ad says, "the way sneering cultural elites and the satanic secular press crucify us. As Harvard historian Arthur Schlesinger, Sr., observed, the belief that Catholics have bad breath is 'the deepest bias in the history of the American people.' We're just as much

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victims as anyone else, and don't you forget it." The ad continues: "We at the *New Ostrich Review* say: Enough! We lift high our heads for the Magisterium, for the papacy, for the Catholicism of the ages. We stand unashamedly with its saints, its martyrs, its popes, its crusaders, its popes again, its inquisitors. Well, maybe not the really rough inquisitors." And more: "We're smart enough after all to know that we don't have all the answers. Isn't that what a papacy is for? We're not among those self-hating dissenters who bellyache at every teaching that is difficult or inconvenient, the kind of weak reeds who would complain to the media if the Pope told Catholics they could only have sex standing on their heads every Tuesday. We believe in the Magisterium and papal authority. And naturally we'd look forward to Tuesdays." "If you're fed up with dissent and decay, if you're a Catholic who unashamedly recognizes that obedience is what Catholicism is unashamedly all about—and that feeling smugly superior to your surrounding culture is the sure sign of an authentic orthodox faith—then give us a try!" The ad concludes with the notice, "Please allow two or three centuries for delivery of first issue." Of course the parody is unfair to the *New Oxford Review*, as is the way with parodies. But it is delightfully funny, and I would be surprised if the *NOR* editors are not at this very minute working on an equally delightful riposte. Thank goodness a really serious publication like First Things is above such frivolities.

■ "No party lasts forever," said Episcopal bishop John S. Spong of Newark, New Jersey, announcing his plans to retire following the election of a successor. Bishop Spong—sometimes called Bishop Sponge for his wondrous capacity for cultural assimilation—set a condition, however. If those opposed to his promotion of ordaining non-celibate homosexual clergy "continue to harass me or this diocese, I will renounce these transition plans." A bishop threatening a church body with his continued service may be a precedent.

■ One death is a tragedy, a million deaths are a statistic. Stalin is supposed to have said that, and he certainly acted upon it. Or at least on the second part of it, since it is far from clear that he thought even one death a tragedy. The best estimate is that, under Lenin and Stalin, at least fifty million people were killed as a matter of state policy, apart from the twenty million deaths resulting from World War II. President Boris Yeltsin set up a Commission for Rehabilitating Victims of Political Repression, and the commission now reports that the dimensions of religious persecution were much greater than previously thought. Over two hundred thousand Orthodox priests, monks, and nuns were slaughtered in the Communist purges of the 1920s and 1930s. According to commission chairman Aleksander Yakovlev, most priests were shot or hanged, although Communist death squads crucified many on church doors and left others to freeze to death in winter after being stripped and soaked in water. In addition to those killed directly, Yakovlev confirms that another half-million priests and religious were imprisoned or deported to Siberia. In a top-secret message of March 1922 to the Politburo, Lenin urged "frenzied and ruthless energy" in seizing church properties, and called for current famine and disease to be exploited in removing enemies of the regime. As many "representatives of the reactionary clergy" as possible should be shot, Lenin commanded, in order to teach opponents of communism "such a lesson that they will not dare to think about any resistance whatsoever for several decades." In September 1943, Stalin decided to reach an accommodation with the Orthodox Church in order to enlist its cooperation in the war effort, and this required convening a synod. Fewer than twenty of the church's two hundred bishops were found still alive in prisons and work camps. In return for total cooperation with the regime, a third of the 54,000 churches that had been closed were allowed to reopen, and the Patriarchate was permitted to move from a shed on Moscow's outskirts to the former German embassy. It is not simply that a million deaths have become a statistic, but in this bloody century scholars split the difference over estimates of millions and even tens of millions of victims. Have Communist regimes deliberately killed eighty million or two hundred million of their citizens? The "scholarly consensus," we are told, is that the right figure is "no less than" 130 million. More or less. And the tragedy of any death and every death is lost in the aggregate. Contemplating crimes of a much lesser scale, St. Augustine wrote 1600 years ago, "Let every one, then, who thinks with pain on these great evils, so horrible, so ruthless, acknowledge that this is misery. And if any one either endures or thinks of them without mental pain, this is a more miserable plight still, for he thinks himself happy because he has lost human feeling" (*City of God* XIX,7).

■ The 1995 Nobel Prize for Literature went to Irish poet Seamus Heaney, and I had to confess I had not read much of him at all. I've been working on amends, including a close reading of his lecture upon accepting the Prize. It's called "Crediting Poetry" and is about trying to do justice to both the terror and sweetness of things. He tells this story: "One of the most harrowing moments in the whole history of the harrowing of the heart in Northern Ireland came when a minibus full of workers being driven home one January evening in 1976 was held up by armed and masked men and the occupants of the van ordered at gunpoint to line up at the side of the road. Then one of the masked executioners said to them, 'Any Catholics among you, step out here.' As it happened, this particular group, with one

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exception, were all Protestants, so the presumption must have been that the masked men were Protestant paramilitaries about to carry out a tit-for-tat sectarian killing of the Catholic as the odd man out, the one who would have been presumed to be in sympathy with the IRA and all its actions. It was a terrible moment for him, caught between dread and witness, but he did make a motion to step forward. Then, the story goes, in that split second of decision, and in the relative cover of the winter evening darkness, he felt the hand of the Protestant worker next to him take his hand and squeeze it in a signal that said no, don't move, we'll not betray you, nobody need know what faith or party you belong to. All in vain, however, for the man stepped out of the line; but instead of finding a gun at his temple, he was pushed away as the gunmen opened fire on those remaining in the line, for these were not Protestant terrorists, but members, presumably, of the Provisional IRA." He says it is hard at times to repress the thought that history is about as instructive as an abattoir, but there is a duty to try. Heaney cites Yeats generously, especially his "Meditations in Time of Civil War," and says of that poem: "It knows that the massacre will happen again on the roadside, that the workers in the minibus are going to be lined up and shot down just after quitting time; but it also credits as a reality the squeeze of the hand, the actuality of sympathy and protectiveness between living creatures. It satisfies the contradictory needs which consciousness experiences at times of extreme crisis, the need on the one hand for a truth-telling that will be hard and retributive, and on the other hand the need not to harden the mind to a point where it denies its own yearnings for sweetness and trust." I expect to be reading more of Seamus Heaney.

■ Nephews, nieces, cousins, that doctor who said he is interested in philosophy. Or was it theology? They might all be included in that list of potential subscribers you were going to send us.

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